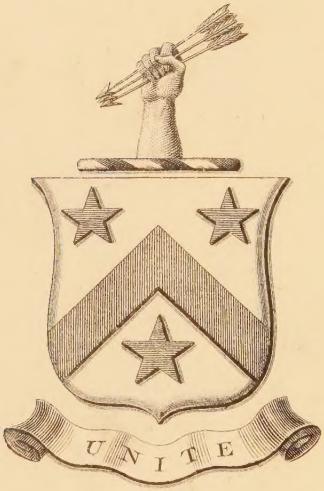

William Brodie

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THE DELAMERES

OF

DELAMERE COURT.

A LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE DUCHESS."

"The fair may find
In this one legend, to their fame designed,
When beauty fires the blood, how love exalts the mind."
DRYDEN'S CIMON AND IPHIGENIA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1852.

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THE DELAMERES

OF

DELAMERE COURT.

CHAPTER I.

SENSE AND NONSENSE.

"Motley's the only wear."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

YES, Mary began to be dissatisfied with her guest, but Lady Margaret was hardly less so with her hostess. The fair daughter of Lord Torrisdale did not exactly follow the thread of Frank's historical deductions, but she did not the less admire in him the possession of qualities in which she herself was deficient. It is human nature, and more especially female nature. In women, there

exists, to a great extent, the bump of veneration—that desire to look upwards which makes them idolize the soldier and the poet, the missionary and the statesman; any one, in short, who possesses accomplishments which command distinction. They may not always accurately comprehend causes, but they are ever, when they are brilliant, fascinated by results; and Frank, whose powers were evidenced by the appreciation of others, became from day to day an object of additional interest to the noble guest at Staunton Lodge.

But as her liking for the gentleman increased, so, as a natural consequence, increased also her irritation at any of her own sex, who were able or willing to dispute with her the possession of his heart, and in this category was Mary Staunton. Lady Margaret could not conceal from herself that Mary's powers of mind were infinitely superior to her own. What pained her more, was the suspicion that Frank had

made a similar discovery. She determined, therefore, if she could not cope with her cousin on her own subjects, to endeavour at least to prevent conversations calculated alike to throw herself into the shade, and to exhibit Mary to advantage.

"I must contrive," said she, in soliloquy, "to put a stop to these dry discussions; nay, more, I must see if I cannot find some new ground on which I can come forward as her equal, if not her superior. But one is so stupid in the country, nothing but a perpetual breakfasting, and dinnering, and suppering. Ah! if I had Mr. Francis Delamere in Hyde Park, or at a ball in dear, delightful Mayfair, or a breakfast at Twickenham, I should soon satisfy him how inferior in dress, in waltzing, in manner, in everything worth admiring in a woman was this argument-loving cousin of mine to Lady Margaret Seton."

The thought of the successful rivalry soothed her mortified feelings, and the

opportunity for entering upon the new struggle, which, she believed, was to assure her conquest, was nearer than she had hoped for.

Mr. Staunton had a fit of the gout. The good man had no time for exercise, and except a saunter in his garden, occasionally varied by the extraordinary exertion of picking up some stray leaf which deformed the pathway, and whose unwelcome presence had escaped the microscopic eye of his head gardener, never put foot to ground, save to walk from his house to his carriage, and from his carriage to his counting-room. Such a system was calculated, even with moderate diet, to produce disease—with the aid of the two daily bottles of port, the pint of sherry, the ox-tail soup, and the made dishes, the *dénouement* surprised no one, but Mr. James Staunton himself. The gout came, and in no mitigated form. The old gentleman took to his bed, and there was every appearance of his remaining there, or

at least of being made a prisoner at Staunton Lodge for a considerable time.

Such a state of things suited the doctor and the apothecary, but not the invalid. The correspondence with the continent had never been more active. The letters were numerous, instant, and confidential. They required immediate reply. To transport himself to the counting-house in Manchester was impossible; to send even a notification of his wishes dangerous, as to do so was to reveal a secret, and the success of his speculations depended upon their secresy. Yet the commercial operations were of too great a magnitude to be either arrested in their course or delayed. To do the one was loss; to do the other would be ruin.

When the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain, and James Staunton, though a faithful son of the Church of England, followed the example of the Prophet. He determined on transferring to his bedside the counting-

house, or at least, that portion of the counting-house whose services were most needed, and Frank, his portmanteau, and his carpet bag, were summoned to Staunton Lodge.

It is easy to guess how eagerly the change was welcomed by Lady Margaret. With Mary the feeling was a more mixed one. She was delighted to have as a permanent inmate one to converse with, who could understand her, even, though from the shyness of Frank's manner, it required no inconsiderable effort to draw him into conversation. But, on the other hand, the energy with which her noble cousin made her advances filled her with alarm. It was not that she was jealous: twenty times a day she treated such an idea with contempt, but she was nervously anxious with regard to the proprieties. Such at least was her own explanation to herself of her own feelings, and it must have been a correct one, for whenever Frank and Lady Margaret were together, Mary's

opinion as to the severe reserve which ought to be felt and expressed in manner by young ladies towards young gentlemen could not have been more rigorous, had it emanated from the chaste mind of Miss Martha Blount. How unfortunate that Mr. Staunton should have taken the gout! How vexatious that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as Lady Margaret had dubbed Frank, should have been summoned to the Lodge!

The evil was done, however, and all that Miss Staunton could do to modify it was to exercise as severe a surveillance as possible over her guests. The decision was excellent; the only difficulty was the carrying it into effect as the offending parties met at breakfast, at lunch, at dinner, and in the evening; and from the old gentleman being confined to his bed, Mary, who was often called away by the necessity of attending to household duties, was compelled to leave her two friends *tête-à-tête.*

Lady Margaret's looks and words were flattering enough to Frank Delamere in Mary's presence, what glances, what compliments might she not venture on in her absence. And the heiress of the cotton-spinner pondered and shivered, and shed a tear. What strange forms indifference occasionally assumes in philosophical young ladies!

"I must put a stop to all this," whispered she to her own heart. "I wonder Margaret is not ashamed of herself. To pay such barefaced attentions to a gentleman. It is really too bad of her. If he gave her any encouragement it might have been excusable. But I must say Mr. Delamere behaves very well. I have a much higher idea of him than I had. I had no conception that he was so rational, or that he had such sound judgment. Oh! how I wish that my father were out of bed! I am sure that with a wheel-chair from Manchester, we could easily have him into

the drawing-room; and then that forward girl would not venture to go on as she does to Mr. Delamere, and it is the more cruel in her to endeavour to win his affections, as I have told her a dozen of times, that he has not a farthing, and cannot afford to support a wife. Yes! my father must come to the drawing-room. I will speak to Dr. Bolus."

Accordingly, that very day Miss Staunton had a private interview with the family physician. What were the arguments which she used did not transpire, but apparently she had satisfied him that his patient was not so ill as he believed him to be, for the same evening a tilt-cart appeared at the door, bearing in its interior an invalid-chair; and on the following morning, the master of the mansion was safely deposited in his new vehicle, and wheeled into the drawing-room, where, though the worthy man was evidently writhing from pain, he was assured by his affectionate

daughter, that he was *very* comfortable. The assertion might have been disputable enough, but the young lady had at least made out her point, and contrived, notwithstanding his grimaces, to keep her invalid progenitor in the general sitting-room. From time to time Mary was still called away, but she now left the apartment in the possession of her guests with much calmer feelings than she had felt upon former occasions, when her absence had ensured to the two the enjoyment of a *tête-à-tête*.

It was upon the day after Mr. Staunton's reappearance. The party had taken their places at the lunch table, with the exception of the master of the mansion, who, reclining in his *chaise ambulante*, and with his foot in its wrappings somewhat of the size of a balloon, endeavoured to look with philosophy at the consumption by others of a thousand good things of which he was forbidden to partake. Sometimes, however, as the viands

which met his eyes were more than ordinarily tempting, his irritation broke forth, and he endeavoured, by impressing upon those present the necessity of avoiding dainties so noxious, to console himself for being debarred all share of them; conveying his sentiments and his spleen occasionally by interjections, and occasionally by admonitory axioms on the dangers consequent on excess in good-living.

"Will you take some of this *pâté aux truffes*, Mr. Delamere," said Miss Staunton.

"Thank you, I have lunched already. Besides these same truffles are rather dangerous acquaintances," and Frank glanced at the foot of Mr. Staunton.

"Right, Sir," said the old gentleman, "quite right. They are dangerous. You are a sensible young man, Mr. Delamere, and at your age to possess such self-control! I am positively astonished at you."

"Astonished at what, my dear father," said Mary. "Is it at Mr. Delamere's

speaking or acting rationally. It pays him but a poor compliment, for to my mind his opinions appear upon most occasions to be distinguished for their good sense."

What a confession for Mary.

"So they are," said the old man, "and that is the reason why I like you, Mr. Delamere."

"And that is the reason why I dislike you, Mr. Delamere," said Lady Margaret Seton.

Her companions turned towards her in astonishment.

"I don't mean that," said Lady Margaret crimsoning to the temples. "In fact I don't well know what I mean, all that I wish to say is that there is nothing I dislike so much as your sensible men."

"Hilloa! Lady Margaret," exclaimed Mr. Staunton. "I often can't understand you fine spoken young ladies, and that is a flight beyond me."

"Oh! it is what everybody understands.

Everybody dislikes men who are always speaking sense, and my father often tells a story of one of the cleverest men in France, who never got on in the world till he left off the bad habit, and spoke nonsense."

"Body o'me!" said the old gentleman, "I should like to hear that story. He must have been a rum chap that."

"The story is a very long one."

"So much the better. It may distract my attention from this confounded toe. So tell it us."

"But I shall fatigue Mary and Mr. Delamere."

Both hastened to reply that they were dying of curiosity to hear it, and Lady Margaret thus properly enforced commenced her history.

"You all know that my father, Lord Torrisdale was ambassador in France. It was not in the time of the late poor dear king, who had his head taken off, but in that of his father or grandfather. I posi-

tively forget which, however, I mean Louis XV. Now in Paris, in those days, there was a great lady, a Madame Tencin. She was a sort of Duchess of Devonshire in her way, and had a beautiful house, and gave the nicest parties imaginable; and there was quite a scramble to get to them, especially by the wise men and the philosophers as they called them; for Madame Tencin was very clever as well as very pretty, and it was considered as sufficient to stamp a man's literary position in the world, his being admitted to, or excluded from the Hotel Tencin. And there used to go Voltaire, that horrid man, who said such clever things, and wrote such shocking stories, and Grimm, and Diderot, and D'Alembert and Mademoiselle L'Espinasse, and Madame Du Deffand, and in short all the clever people of Paris. Now I dare say you have all read the *Contes Moraux*, and very nice tales they are, all about shepherdesses in such becoming round straw hats and Pompadour

ribbons. Well the author of these tales was Marmontel. He was very young and very good-looking, and as he was commencing his literary career and anxious to gain himself a position in the world, he contrived after a great deal of trouble to get an invitation to the Hotel Tencin. Well, poor fellow! he knew that it would be the making of him, if he could gain the smiles of the lady of the house. So he tried hard to please, and spoke a great deal of good-sense. Oh! he was very sensible indeed. You, Mr. Staunton, and you, Mary, would have been delighted with him, but somehow or other the excellent qualities did not answer."

Mary smiled.

"You smile, Mary. It is very rude of you to interrupt me so, more especially as you have not heard the end of the story. Well, about a fortnight after there was another party at the Hotel Tencin, and Marmontel was not asked. He soon learned the intended gaieties, and his exclusion from

them. As he was not conscious of having done anything, which merited so marked an omission, he could not believe that the party was general, and to satisfy himself when the night came, went close to the *porte-cochère*, and with a cloak thrown over his head and shoulders to prevent his being recognised, watched the guests as they entered. All the distinguished littérateurs of France were there but himself. He returned home in despair."

"More fool he," growled old Staunton, "to take so much to heart the loss of what, I dare say, was at the best, a sort of tea and turn out, perhaps scarce so good; for, I'll be bound they had no muffins, and they say they always starve you in France, and never even dream of giving you a good supper."

The fair narrator acknowledged the interruption only by a look of contempt, and a slight shrug of the shoulders, and proceeded.

"On the following morning hope returned, and Marmontel determined to reconquer his entrance to the Hotel Tencin. Now, he was a great favourite of Madame Denis, Voltaire's ugly niece. So he told her his sad story, and she persuaded her uncle to go to the great lady of Paris, and intercede for her *protégé*. The ill-natured snuffy old man for once chanced to be in a good humour, and he went.

"'Madame Tencin,' said he, 'I have come as ambassador from a young friend of mine, who has had the misfortune to lose your good graces. He has been nearly desperate ever since, and he begs me to assure you that if he has offended, he is unconscious of the offence.'

"'And who may be the culprit,' said the lady with a smile.

"'Young Marmontel.'

"'Don't mention his name to me, Monsieur de Voltaire,' said she, throwing herself back in her *fauteuil* with a gesture

of intense disgust; 'he is positively the most disagreeable man in the world. He is always speaking sense.'

"There's for you, Mary; what do you say to that?"

"Simply," replied her cousin, "that I am not compelled to tie myself to the chariot-wheels of Madame Tencin, or acknowledge the justice of her opinions."

"Oh! but you must, Mary, you must. It was but last week that you were praising the judgment of the French ladies, and you cannot turn round upon me now, and condemn to day what you approved of yesterday."

"And that's all," said Mr. Staunton, gruffly. "Well, I must say, that your Madame what you call her was very silly. But what could one expect of a French woman?"

"No, Sir; that is not all. I have told only the first part of the story because it shows, and I beg to call the attention of

Mr. Delamere to the fact, how a young gentleman, very good-looking, and with delightful manners, and indeed very *distingué*, I may say, (and the little head gave a nod at intervals, as if to enable her *vis-à-vis* to apply fully the eulogiums), lost the favour of society, and was not liked by the ladies, merely because he had got into a bad habit of speaking sense. And now to show how he recovered their good graces I will finish my story."

"What, is it not done yet?" once more growled forth Mr. Staunton. "I must allow it is very long, and I cannot understand a word of it."

Lady Margaret took no notice of the commentary, and went on.

"Now, Voltaire had been well-tutored by Madame Denis, and she had told him never to venture to show his face again, unless he brought back Marmontel's pardon. So he coaxed Madame Tencin, and upon his promising that Marmontel should

never speak sense again, the great lady undertook to send him a card for her next party. Well, the invitation came, and the day. Marmontel went, and made his bow to the lady of the house. She turned her back on him. It was due to Voltaire to have sent the invitation. It was due to her own dignity to show she had been justly offended with her guest.

"Now, you may remember, that I told you that Madame Tencin was not only very pretty, but very clever, and moreover was fond of doing what you, Mary, admire so much in French women, speaking to twenty or thirty people at a time. Unfortunately, upon the present occasion there were not twenty or thirty people to speak to. The room in which she had taken her place was usually full of an admiring crowd, hanging on her words. On the present occasion, strange to say, it was nearly empty. By degrees it got thinner and thinner, till at last only two or three per-

sons remained in it besides the mistress of the house.

"Madame Tencin remarked it at length, and could not comprehend what had become of her guests. She hurried to the boudoir —there was not a soul in it. At last, from the great drawing-room which terminated the suite, she heard shouts of laughter and clapping of hands. She rushed towards it. It was crammed to the door. She pressed her way through the crowd, and in its centre she found her sensible friend doing —what do you think—proving to a delighted audience that the moon was made of green cheese. From that day, Marmontel became the most welcome visitor at the Hotel Tencin. What do you think of that, Mary? Do you observe the moral, Mr. Delamere? It is worthy of every young gentleman's notice. Marmontel was ruined by being sensible, and succeeded in the world as soon as he began to talk nonsense."

"You are wrong, my dear Margaret,"

said Mary. "It is true, that Marmontel became the star of the Hotel Tencin, but it was not by folly, but by the affectation of it. Nothing but the most consummate ability could have enabled him to support, for a moment, with the favour of his audience his most monstrous proposition. He spoke nonsense, indeed, but it was good nonsense; and that rarest of all rare qualities charmed in him, because the trash which would have disgusted from other lips, had in his become gilded over by wonderful knowledge, and wit, and powers of language."

This was not exactly the deduction which the daughter of Lord Torrisdale would have drawn from her story; but ere she could reply a carriage drove up to the door, and a servant announced Mr. Theophilus and Miss Augusta Popkins.

CHAPTER II.

LADY MARGARET PLOTS.

"The play's the thing."

HAMLET.

The proper salutations were made. Miss Staunton was complimented by Mr. Theophilus on her looks. Mr. Staunton was condoled with by Miss Augusta on his toe. The gentleman bowed profoundly to the fair daughter of Lord Torrisdale. The lady cast a furtive glance at Frank Delamere. After these preliminaries, the usual routine of conversation was gone through; the visitors were pressed to take lunch, and declined; they did not wish lunch; they had lunched before they left home. It was then discovered that the weather was fine, and the

roads dusty; and the first was voted delightful—the last pronounced shocking.

When all the minor topics of conversation, which are regularly paraded on such occasions, had been thus respectably got quit of, there was a pause. Mr. Theophilus cast a telegraphic glance at Miss Augusta. Miss Augusta looked imploringly at Mr. Theophilus. The gentleman was obdurate, however; his lips uttered no sound; and the lady was consequently obliged, as the American newspapers have it, to take possession of the floor.

"Miss Staunton," said she, with that soft, saccharine manner with which young ladies are so fond of addressing each other, "we are come to ask a favour of you—a very great favour indeed."

"And what may that be?" said Mary, smiling.

"Why, you must know we have a few young friends staying with us just now; and one of them has been telling us, that

in Norfolk, where she has been paying a visit, there have been such gay doings—archery meetings and private theatricals; and she has been suggesting that we might get up such a thing here. My father very good-naturedly has made no objections, so we have decided on attempting something of the sort. We propose, as many of our country neighbours live at a distance, to combine the two, and have both on one day—the archery meeting in the morning, and some comedy or other at night. We think we can manage it; for Theophilus, since he has gone into the Carabineers, has become quite a connoisseur in such matters. All the Carabineers are great performers." And Miss Popkins paused.

"That would be delightful," said Mary, seeing the necessity for saying something; "and I suppose you have kindly come over here to ask me to be a spectator. I shall be most happy, and so, I doubt not, will Lady Margaret Seton and Mr. Delamere."

"Delighted above all things," eagerly responded the former. "I love archery meetings, and I positively adore private theatricals."

The latter bowed his assent.

But the approbation of all parties did not seem to convey unmixed satisfaction to the visitors, for Popkins, brother and sister, recommenced their silent duet, and telegraphed each other as before. Again Miss Augusta took up the conversation.

"I am sure we shall be delighted to see you, Miss Staunton, and Lady Margaret Seton and Mr. Delamere; but to say the truth, we came here to ask something more than your mere presence. You must know that the play acted in Norfolk was "The Rivals." The young lady now with us was the Julia of the comedy, and she tells me in confidence that she played the part beautifully. Now she has suggested that we should represent the same piece here. We can cast most of the characters easily enough,

and we have a Captain Absolute in Theophilus. But there is one which, from the success of the play depending on it, requires some one very superior to act it, and we came here in the hope that Miss Staunton would take the part of Lydia Languish."

"Impossible, my dear Miss Popkins. I should make a shocking actress; and, to say the truth, the Languishes are not at all in my way."

"But I am sure your good nature would persuade you to consent, if you knew that the play could not go on without you."

"Impossible," repeated Mary, in that grave tone which announces a determination not to be changed.

The visitors, lady and gentleman, were in dismay. Not so Lady Margaret. She saw in the offer and its refusal a ray of hope. The glitter, the display, the dressing, all promised her the opportunity she had longed for of exhibiting herself in contrast, and she believed happy contrast, to her

cousin. With private theatricals she was familiar. She had acted often and well. Her beauty of itself would have secured her success, and it was ably seconded by the qualities so popular on the stage —her forwardness, her petulance, her more than self-possession. Strange that we should applaud in the mimic world, characters and manners which would revolt us in the real.

"I do not know, Miss Popkins," said the daughter of Lord Torrisdale, in the blandest of all possible tones, "if I interfere with your arrangements. My cousin has refused to play Lydia, and you say that the refusal will put a stop to your very agreeable proposed gaieties. This would be most distressing, after all the trouble you have taken to amuse your friends. I have seen a good deal of the sort of thing, and if I could be accepted as a humble substitute, I need hardly say that my poor talents are entirely at your service."

The proposal was received with delight by the Popkinses. To have had the rich Miss Staunton for their *prima donna* was something; but to have the part enacted by Lady Margaret Seton, the beautiful daughter of the Earl of Torrisdale, whose partners at the Queen's balls, and whose dresses at the Queen's drawing-rooms were regularly advertised in the newspapers, was sufficient to stamp the Château Popkins with distinction for ever. The offer accordingly was graciously accepted, the visitors retired, and Lady Margaret proceeded to study her part.

But as solitary rehearsing was dull work, she determined to enlist in the service the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Frank was pounced on half a dozen times a day. She insisted upon his holding her book or playing the part of prompter, or critic, or actor, each in their turn. None of the race of the Languishes had ever been half so zealous. At every spare moment, the new

Lydia was hunting for her Captain Absolute, or her dear Lieutenant Beverley.

Mary Staunton was indignant, and remonstrated with her cousin. She could not venture, however, to hint at her personal causes for vexation, so she became philosophical, and preached morality in the abstract.

"I am really astonished at you, Margaret," said she. "I cannot understand how any woman can voluntarily be an actress. To put herself into a position where, if it should be necessary, she must be caressed by a man, or have his arm round her waist, or it may be even kissed by him. It is positively dreadful."

"And so it would be with such a fright as young Popkins."

"And would it it not be equally so with any one else—with Mr. Delamere, for instance? You are always having him by your side, Margaret, and insisting on his getting on his knees, and squeezing your

hand, and calling you his dear Lydia. I am astonished at you."

"Bless me, my love, how can I help it? It's all in the play. The acting requires it."

"I do not approve of such acting."

"Pshaw! where's the harm? I never should think of standing on ceremony with Frank Delamere. I consider him, in fact, as one of the family. And then he is the most modest young man I ever saw; some girls would call him quite stupid with his reserve; and besides, I look upon him as a sort of cousin. He was very intimate with my brothers, at Oxford."

Lady Margaret's fashion of establishing a relationship, ingenious as it was, would hardly have been recognised by the Herald Office. The fair genealogist, however, was destined to be as fortunate in securing the attendance of Frank Delamere as if she had proved the consanguinity. Some favouring deity had no doubt heard the horror she had expressed

at the thought of enacting Lydia to Mr. Popkins; for a few days after, for the fiftieth time, a rumour was spread of a French invasion, and the gallant Theophilus was ordered to join at head-quarters at a moment's notice. The anguish of the Julia, who had acted so well in Norfolk, was great—the despair of the Augusta, who was not to receive Lady Margaret Seton for her guest, still greater. The play was at a stand-still. At last some brilliant imagination suggested that Mr. Delamere should be requested to take the part of Captain Absolute; and a note, private and confidential. to Lady Margaret, besought her, if she had no objection to acting with Mr. Delamere, to accomplish so worthy a *dénouement*.

Lady Margaret had no objections. On the contrary, the task was a labour of love, and she undertook it most willingly. Yet the matter was not likely to be an easy one. It might be possible to persuade Frank, though even that was doubtful; but

there was another person to be consulted, who, it was probable, would be more obstinate in his refusal, and that was Mr. Staunton. The old gentleman had brought down the heir of the Delameres for the purpose of conducting his foreign correspondence, and it was not to be expected that he would permit his time and talents to be diverted to a new employment.

The young lady did not hesitate, however. She boldly made her request. It was refused point blank. She had expected as much, and was not disheartened. Like most women, she had one quality, valuable beyond all others—that of perseverance. Fifty times was she discomfited, but she still returned to the attack with as much confidence as if she had never experienced defeat. For three whole days was the struggle carried on fiercely between the master of Staunton Lodge and his fair guest, but it terminated as such struggles gene-

rally do. Men call themselves the Lords of the Creation, and obey.

"No, no, Lady Margaret," said the old gentleman, as seated in the drawing-room, in his chair, on the evening of the third day, and with Frank by his side, he was once more assailed by his indomitable foe. "I tell you again and again, no. Mr. Delamere has enough to do in attending to the foreign correspondence, and has not a moment to spare."

"That's a fib, papa Staunton. He has plenty of time, if you chose to be good-humoured. So, dear papa, do let him play Captain Absolute. You ought, for you have something of the blood of the Absolutes yourself—a very near relation, believe me, of Sir Anthony's. The worthy Baronet was just like you—a headstrong, obstinate, dear, delightful old gentleman."

Mr. Staunton rapped the floor with his stick, in petulant irritation.

"That's it—that's exactly it—you are as

like Sir Anthony as two cherries on a stalk. So you will let Mr. Delamere go."

"No, no."

"But if you don't, I can't wear my new green silk négligée in the first act."

"Pooh! pooh!"

"Or my white satin dress, with the oak-leaves and acorns, in the third."

"Pshaw! nonsense!"

"And, worst of all, we can't have the play."

"The d—l take the play!" roared the cotton-spinner, who at that moment had a twinge in his toe, that put his politeness and philosophy to the rout, and made him bellow forth an anathema, which we have expressed in a *very* modified form; and which, though especially intended to denounce the main cause of his annoyances, had somehow missed the gout, and hit the comedy.

"Oh, shocking! oh, dreadful!" exclaimed his fair tormentor. "What a word! and before a young lady too! I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself."

The wonder was unnecessary; shame had appeared already; and the conscience-stricken manufacturer, overwhelmed by the recollection of his enormities, sat the picture of contrite sorrow.

His dismay was perceived in an instant by his companion, and she endeavoured to avail herself of it.

"Ah! you may well blush. I am sure I do, and so does Mr. Delamere. It was very, very wrong; but I will pardon you, upon one condition—you will let Mr. Delamere go."

"No," said, once more, Mr. Staunton; but the manner was subdued, and the tone had lost its decision.

"But it would please Mr. Popkins."

"I don't care for Mr. Popkins."

"And he has just sent you an invitation. How ungrateful! But it would please Lord Torrisdale."

Mr. Staunton fidgetted. The last remark had evidently carried weight.

"My dear young lady," said he at length, in accents of conciliation, "I am most anxious to oblige you and your father. So take a seat, and let us talk over this matter rationally."

"I had made a vow never to talk rationally," said his hopeful guest; "but for once I will break through my rule, and listen to you."

With the words she placed a chair beside the invalid, passed an arm within his, placed her small Hebe face close to his cheek; and then, in a coaxing voice, whispered in his ear:

"Well, papa Staunton, what have you got to say?"

"My dear Lady Margaret, you know why I sent for Mr. Delamere."

The fair lady nodded.

"It was to write here my foreign letters."

"How tiresome! Did not I tell you I knew it?"

"Now, you are well aware that it would be perfectly inconsistent with this necessary duty, were I to permit him to go and act plays"

"Not at all inconsistent. There is plenty of time for both."

"Impossible!"

"It is an adage of Lord Torrisdale, that to the strong-minded nothing is impossible; and people say that Mr. Staunton's mind is a strong one."

The old gentleman first smiled, then looked grave, and then shook his head.

The last operation had been energetic enough to fill the atmosphere with hair-powder, and was intended as a disclaimer of the eulogium. It was evident, nevertheless, that the compliment had taken effect, for it was in a voice, which, by comparison, might

have been called good humoured, that the Cotton Spinner replied.

"And for how long, young lady, should you require Mr. Delamere?"

"Oh! for a mere nothing of time. This is the 15th, the Popkins's party comes off on the 22nd, so I would need him only for seven or eight days."

"Only seven or eight days!" said her host, in uncontroulable astonishment. "If it had been simply for an evening, I might have consented. But eight days are out of the question. You forget, young lady, that we have a daily post."

"And you forget, old gentleman, that Mr. Delamere has nothing to do with it. His duties are confined to the foreign correspondence, and the foreign mail is made up only on the first of every month. To try to trick me, so; naughty papa, Staunton!"

The manufacturer looked discomfited for

a moment, but he took heart of grace and resumed.

"But, my dear young lady, that is only in London. Here in the country we are a great way off, and are obliged to make up our despatches long, long before."

"Not so very long," said his companion with a malicious smile. "The Heligoland mail closes at Manchester at five o'clock in the evening of the 30th, exactly twenty-four hours before the London time. What again trying to cheat a poor ignorant girl; naughty, naughty, naughty, papa Staunton!"

The Cotton Spinner sat speechless and aghast at the commercial knowledge displayed by his guest; the young lady took advantage of his silence, and renewed her suit.

"Now I know you will let Mr. Delamere go. You are looking very well to-day; quite handsome. Do let him go," and the rosy lips approached his ear, and whispered,

"and perhaps I may give you such a nice kiss.'"

Whether it was that he was tempted by the proffered remuneration, or that he was overcome by the combined attack of the lady and the gout is difficult to say, but the worthy man looked completely exhausted, and his expression became first vacillating and then consenting. After a pause he gasped forth:

"Well, if I must, I must; but my reasons."

"Oh! never mind your reasons," said Lady Margaret. "I never have any for anything I do myself, and I abominate them in others. So you let him go?"

"I suppose I must."

"You say yes, then?"

Yes was said, but in a tone which could not have been more feeble, had it consented to the ruin of all the manufacturer's speculations.

"That's a dear," said the fair damsel,

springing to her feet. "You are a positive love. You have been better than your word, and you shall see that I will be better than mine."

As she spoke she stole behind the old man's chair and touched either port wine cheek with lips that would have bribed an anchorite. She then advanced gravely to Frank, who had been standing by, awaiting with philosophy his being made the prize of the conqueror. The young lady placed herself immediately in front of him, and dropped him a courtesy to the very floor.

"Mr. Delamere," said she, "would you do me the honour to take hold of one end of my handkerchief." The gentleman obeyed. "Now follow me;" and the fair dame moved off, leading her captive after her with the air of a Roman conqueror in the hour of his triumph.

Mr. Staunton watched their retreating footsteps with a face in which irritation and astonishment were strangely mingled.

"Well, by Jingo!" said he, when he had found utterance; "that beats cock-fighting. The foreign corresponding clerk of Willis and Staunton going a play-actoring, and with the consent of the head of the firm too. Who would believe it. But faith I had better tell Popkins to keep it quiet, for if it was to get abroad, folks might say that the partners of the house had gone mad, and the very rumour were enough to put us all in the Gazette; and then Lady Margaret knowing the foreign post day, and the exact hour at which the Heligoland mail was made up at Manchester; and then her saying that I was a relation of some Baronet or other —a Sir Anthony something. It is all utterly incomprehensible," and the worthy man looked as if like Horatio, he had discovered that there were more things in the world than had been dreamed of in his philosophy.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXCELLENCES OF A TUNIC.

"Nora Crina's gown for me
Floating light as mountain breezes,
Leaving every beauty free
To rise or fall as nature pleases."

MOORE.

The important point being settled, that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs was to assume the buskin, preparations for the great day went on swimmingly at Staunton Lodge. As far as the learning his part was concerned, Frank had comparatively little to do, for his past frequent and enforced rehearsals with Lady Margaret, had already in a great measure made him familiar with the

words. Something, however, still remained to be added to his former labours.

In the first instance, he had only pronounced occasional passages, usually selected by his fair companion for their high-flown sentiment, or the extravagant admiration expressed in their language; now, he proceeded to study his duties more in detail. The billiard-table was removed; a clothes horse placed on either side of the room and covered with carpet, and from behind these, intended to represent the side scenes of a theatre, the lady and gentleman advanced and retired according to the most approved rules of histrionic art.

As for the costume, as far as the male performer was concerned it was easily arranged; for Captain Absolute was understood not to be with his regiment, and, of course, wore the ordinary morning and evening dress of every-day life; and thus, fortunately for Frank's purse, he had nothing to do in the way of purchasing fresh habili-

ments. With the lady it was a different matter. Women love decorating themselves, and some ill-natured person has even alleged (though, of course, nobody believes him), that the eagerness for matrimony displayed by not a few of the sex, is but the consequence of their anxiety to possess the dresses and jewels which form the general accompaniments of the bridal. The daughter of Lord Torrisdale was in no degree superior to the foibles of the fair sisterhood. She embraced eagerly so respectable an apology for opening a communication with her milliner, and gave herself up heart and soul, to her toilet preparations.

The costume of Lydia Languish afforded little scope for fancy. The already chronicled green silk *négligée* in the first act, to be exchanged during the piece for a white satin dress, draped in the bust *à la Grecque*, and festooned with oak leaves and acorns, together with a wreath of the same, for the head,

left nothing to be desired. The drapery to be displayed at the archery meeting demanded more meditation.

"What shall I wear, my dear Mary?"

"Why really, love, these are matters in which you are more versant than myself. You were at an archery meeting at Wimbledon last year, and had a dress for it. Why not wear it again?"

"Ah! I remember. Yes, I had, and the things are at home now. But they will never do. I have worn them—you will scarcely believe it—twice already."

"That certainly," said Mary, with a smile, "proves them to be altogether obsolete. Nevertheless their style may have been in good taste and may be copied. If you will describe them, you shall have my opinion."

"Well, first of all you must know, dear, that I had a green silk hat, somewhat in the shape of the Spanish beavers, which one sees in Vandyke's portraits. It was very broad in the brim, and turned up a little

in front, with a perfect love of a green feather, wreathed half round, and hanging over my left shoulder."

"That must have been very pretty. Now for the gown."

"My dear Mary, it was not a gown. It was a tunic."

"And what do you call a tunic?"

"Oh, Mary! to ask such a question. Why, a dress, to be sure, that is very loose over the chest, and very much drawn in at the waist, and very short in the skirt. Mine did not come much below the knee."

"Not much below the knee?" said Mary, nearly petrified with horror at the confession. "It must have looked shocking!"

"On the contrary, it looked perfectly beautiful! I had the nicest silk stockings in the world, and all the gentlemen paid me such compliments; and (now don't laugh, Mary), Lord Hazelton told me that I was positively divine!"

"Oh, Margaret, I wonder that womanly

feeling—that shame did not prevent your allowing yourself to be seen in such immodest clothing!"

"What was there to be ashamed of? Upon such occasions one is obliged to dress in character, and in the old pictures of Robin Hood you always see Maid Marian in a kirtle."

"Well, my dear love, suppose it were so that was in the twelfth century; and the opinions of society have changed much since, with regard to what is proper and improper in female costume. What would be considered correct then would be considered very incorrect now."

"It is quite a mistake, Mary. The opinion of society has gone just the other way. It was only last week, that I was reading an account of a great ball at the Tuileries, given by the First Consul, at which all the ladies appeared in the classical Greek costume, precisely as it was originally worn. Some came as heroines,

some as goddesses, and Pauline Bonaparte, who represented Venus, had a cestus studded with diamonds, and sandals without stockings, and a robe which was open at the side. Nay, you need not look grave, Mary. It was not so bad as you think, for it was connected every six inches by golden *agraffes*."

"How unfeminine!" said the young heiress, colouring deeply; "how degrading to the dignity of our sex!"

"Well, my love, you need not fret yourself; I am not going to imitate Pauline Bonaparte. And as to my tunic, there was no great harm in having it a little short, and showing a bit of one's ankles; for what's the use of having good ones if nobody knows it?"

"A bit of your ankles! Oh, Margaret! But you know I have no right to dictate to you. You must decide for yourself, so we will not discuss the subject. Now tell me the rest of your dress."

"Oh, always strictly in character! The tunic was, of course, green, while over my left shoulder was a broad silk scarf of the same colour which descended to the knee, and was tied at my right side in a great bow, in the fashion in which you may recollect the scarf of the Duke of Marlborough in the picture in the drawing-room at Castle Torrisdale."

"And that was all."

"Oh no, dear! how could you suppose that I could leave anything so incomplete. The French understand these matters, and Madame Victorine's letters contain always one phrase, and that is: *une dame bien gantée et bien chaussée.* Do you think I could forget my gloves and my boots?"

"And they were—"

"Green, love—both green. The boots of silk—the gloves, you know, kid."

"How very becoming."

"Yes, I flatter myself it was so; but what I was proudest of was, that my dress

was so entirely in character. Maid Marian could not have got it up better."

Heaven preserve us! thought Mary; Robin Hood's wife in silk boots and green kid gloves! The very idea is sufficient to call Strutt and Montfaucon from their graves. She did not say so, however, but continued aloud:

"But don't you think, my dear Margaret, that it is rather late to talk of ordering a dress. The meeting is to take place on the 22nd; our dress-makers at Manchester are not very distinguished, and you have hardly time to get anything new from London. You had better send for the things you have, and it will be easy for your maid to run you up a gown somewhat longer than your present, to wear under your scarf."

"No, no, Mary; I won't resign the tunic; but you are right as to there being no time to get a new dress, so I must make my present one serve. But keep my secret, Mary; I should die with shame if any one

found out that it had been worn twice already."

The promise was given, and the dress, so correctly illustrative of the twelfth century, was sent for.

In the meanwhile the rehearsing went on with redoubled vigour. In the first instance Frank had gone into the scheme most unwillingly, partly because his spirits were too low to permit him to enjoy an amusement which, in earlier days, he would have keenly relished, and partly because his pride, as well as his recollections, forbade him to pay, even in mimic scenes, attention to Lady Margaret Seton. So long, therefore, as the rehearsing had been merely rehearsing, he had endeavoured upon all occasions to escape her quick glance, or plead the duties of the foreign correspondence. Even when pounced on by the young lady, and compelled to make the responses of Captain Absolute, he had uttered them in a tone cold enough to have warranted the charge made by Sir

Anthony against his son, that of being "a stock"—"a block"—"an anchorite;" but when it was decided by Mr. Staunton that he was not only to appear in the rehearsal but in the play itself, he determined, from respect to the old gentleman, as well as from a good-natured desire to aid his fair companion in attaining the success of which she was understood to be ambitious, to do everything in his power to top his part. He was fortunate even beyond his most sanguine expectations. A true Delamere, he was impressionable, and, like most impressionable beings, could mould himself easily into the gestures, the language, the very habit of thought and action in others, and his addresses as the lover were intonated with a pathos which, while it enchanted the heart of the Lydia, brought also, strange to say, no unfrequent pang to that of Mary Staunton.

At last the day arrived, the auspicious day which like others appropriated to what

are termed festal reunions, was probably to witness so much apparent happiness and real sorrow. Young ladies crowd eagerly to the ball-room in search of pleasure, and yet how few in truth, find it within its walls. How many neglects are there which were not anticipated; how many attentions which were not wished for; how many persons present whose addresses irritate or exhaust; how often one absent whom, and whom alone the fair one went to see.

The scene was a gay one. Mr. Popkins occupied a villa somewhat of the same character as Staunton Lodge, for in England imitation is not merely a habit, but a creed, and it were safer for a man to commit one of the seven deadly sins, than to build or furnish a house in a style different to those of his fellows. The grounds were about twenty acres in extent, and at the foot of a bank covered with wood, had been erected a large marquee or

tent, in which were arranged seats for the elder portion of the company; while at one end was a sort of bar or refreshment-room, behind which sundry rosy-cheeked Hebes stood dispensing ices and sherbet to the well appetized visitors of the house of Popkins. In front were the butts for the archery, while upon the rising ground, at the end of the tent, had been placed seats at different elevations, so as to enable the spectators to witness at their ease the progress of the sports. To contest the prize appeared some eight or ten young ladies, and about as many young gentlemen exhibiting in their dress almost every variety of costume, which had ever been adopted by Diana, or Amazon, or arrow-bearing men. But amongst all, there was none that excited such intense admiration as Lady Margaret's. The green feather fascinated the ladies, the tunic enraptured the gentlemen, while the fair wearer conscious of her own high rank, and her infi-

ite superiority to everything around her, walked about with an air which seemed to intimate, that like Alexander Selkirk, she was "monarch of all she surveyed."

In the meantime the archery began. The shooting was considered excellent. One arrow positively hit the target. There were others within ten feet of it, and to the brilliant toxophilites who had discharged them were assigned the prizes of the meeting. Lady Margaret was not amongst them, for notwithstanding the acquaintance she had vaunted with the subject, her arrows with unhappy fatality, went everywhere but where they ought; while one more unfortunate than its fellows, strayed so widely from the mark, that it transfixed the hat of worthy Mr. Popkins, who standing at least a hundred feet from the canvas-covered circles of straw rope, fancied himself in complete security, nor dreamt, when he gave his consent to his children reviving

the sports of the olden time, that he was likely to be so nearly the victim of his good nature.

When the amusements of the day were terminated, preparations began to be made for those of the night. The visitors adjourned to the marquee, to discuss the good things which there awaited them, while Frank and Lady Margaret with the other intending performers of the drama, retired to their rooms, and made the changes in their dress necessary for the representation. A newly-erected barn had been fitted up as a theatre, under the direction of the manager of the Thespian temple at Manchester. It was tastefully decorated, and well lighted, and when filled, had a brilliant appearance. There were no pit, boxes, or gallery, but the seats rose in a succession of steps, in a semicircular sweep, like the benches of a Roman amphitheatre. In the centre, in the place of honour, sat Mary, but alone, for Mr. Staunton was still laid up with

the gout, while around and behind marshalled according to their dignities, were the families of the Magnificoes of the Manchester world. When all were collected, the bell rung, the curtain rose, and the play began.

The characters (as they generally are in private theatricals) were sustained lamely enough. One thing only distinguished the performers, and that was their perfect independence. Each troubled himself little about his fellows, and when not speaking, was for the most part nervously employed in putting to rights some leg or arm, or piece of dress, which had rebelled against all good discipline, and got into a wrong place. As for the young lady who had enraptured Norfolk as Julia, she seemed to take small interest in the attentions of her devoted Falkland, and in delivering what she thought effective passages, uniformly turned her back upon him, and like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, told the story of her woes to the audience.

Then there was forgetting the cues of the parts, and stoppings from real or affected timidity, and going on or coming off the stage on the wrong side, and worst of all, unpardonable negligence in the prompter: a duty which had been assumed by Miss Popkins, and would have been honestly discharged, had not the fair Augusta been so anxious to employ usefully the precious moments, in taking notes of the dress of the fashionable daughter of Lord Torrisdale, that she had little time to attend to the imploring looks, or angry grimaces of the stammering performers.

The contrast to all this, exhibited by Frank and Lady Margaret was striking. Both high-bred, high-born, and very handsome, they enacted with the truthfulness of life, their character of "lady and gentleman," these most difficult of all parts, because of those who for the most represent them on the stage, few have played them from infancy. The consciousness of superiority too, pos-

sessed by the distinguished amateurs, gave them confidence; the excitement of the present crowd and the applause added to their power. By degrees, they forgot that they were Lady Margaret and Mr. Delamere. The gentleman worshipped his Lydia, or squabbled with his testy papa, in a manner which could not have been surpassed, had he been the veritable Jack himself, while the lady, who had some of the blood of the Languishes in her veins, inspired with the enthusiasm of her companion, and her own, became that most irritating and enchanting of beings, a petulant, pretty woman. The curtain fell amidst shouts of applause, and the parties immediately adjourned to the supper room. When that was over, the carriages were ordered round and each sought their own home.

The personages in whom we are most interested followed the general example and returned to Staunton Lodge. As soon as she had reached it, Lady Margaret sought her

chamber. She closed the door and ere she rang for her abigail, drew herself up in front of the large cheval glass which decorated the bottom of the apartment. The haughty black eye, the voluptuous mouth, the raven hair, braided upon the temples, and circled with its double string of pearls, the bust, the waist, the mouse-like foot, the satin dress, all faultless, were traced in the pure crystal. The daughter of Lord Torrisdale looked long and steadily at the beautiful image reflected on its surface, and her cheek coloured and her eye flashed as she gazed.

"Now," said she, "Frank Delamere has seen what a woman is and can be. I have nothing further to fear from Mary Staunton."

CHAPTER IV.

REACTION.

"How it comes let Doctors tell,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Meg grew sick as he grew heal,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't."

DUNCAN GREY.

LADY MARGARET was wrong. Frank had seen her in all her glory as a successful *prima donna*, but he did not seem the more disposed to offer incense on the altar of his would-be idol. It might be that he recollected that though the world was a stage, there were a thousand homely and practical duties to be discharged in real life which never found a place in the frippery and exaggerated representation of it in the theatre,

and that in the performance of such duties he deemed Lady Margaret deficient. Whatever were the cause, the charms which had been so complacently admired in the looking-glass, and which to say the truth so well deserved admiration, failed to produce the effect which their proprietress had expected. Her young companion had been assiduous as Captain Absolute, but his vivacity disappeared when he laid aside the character which had produced it, and he became as before the commencement of the rehearsals, cold, distant, and self-possessed.

It was in vain that by accident, and the accidents were frequent, Lady Margaret chanced to stumble upon him at moments when he was not occupied by the duties of the foreign correspondence. It was in vain that in the evenings spent in the drawing-room, she endeavoured to dispel what she thought his timidity in the thousand ways which all young ladies understand so well. Frank was always polite, but his politeness

still retained its formality. He answered instantly when spoken to, and discharged rigorously all the courtesies of society, but beyond that, he said, and looked, and did nothing.

Lady Margaret became irritated. It was true she might have consoled herself by remarking that Frank Delamere's manner was even more chilling to Mary Staunton than to herself. But this did not console her, and things were becoming painful to both parties when an event occurred, which freed the lady and gentleman alike from a situation which had become mutually embarrassing.

Mr. Staunton got quit of his gout. After his convalescence there was no longer any necessity for the foreign corresponding clerk remaining at the Lodge. Frank accordingly returned to Laurel Cottage, and things once more resumed their ordinary train.

In the meanwhile time went on. Nearly six months had elapsed since the heir of the

Delameres had been appointed to his new situation, and every day won him golden opinions in the eyes of Mr Staunton. And Frank well deserved them. He was, as the head clerk of the office privately assured his master, quite a pattern sort of a young man, never asking for holidays, never too late in the morning, never eager to quit his day's task, but always ready to remain to any hour, and to discharge his duties in the most efficient manner.

In fact, Frank's high birth gave him advantages. To one who had seen society, and the best society in London and in Paris, the acting of a third-rate theatre, the little parties, the hops to the piano, the tea and turn-outs, the desire to blaze in the eyes of the provincial belles, which formed a constant subject of attraction to the Mr. Johnsons, the Mr. Tompsons, and the Mr. Smiths of the establishment, had for him no charms. Invitations of course he received in plenty, for he was still in the eyes of his

fellows of the pen a great man. He was still Mr. Delamere of Delamere, the nephew of Lord Lacy and the cousin of the Duke of Acton. Besides, as we have said, Frank was handsome. The Miss Johnsons, the Miss Tompsons, and the Miss Smiths, had the good taste to admire him; and their mammas, in obedience to the whispered suggestions of the young ladies, poured down upon him a perfect avalanche of invitations. It was in vain. Frank would go nowhere. The only exception was to Staunton Lodge, and thither he went, as he told his companions of the desk, and truly, because he considered the invitation of his employer in the light of a command. Of all this the Cotton Spinner was duly informed by his aged clerk, and all this served to raise Frank in his estimation.

Besides, Mr. Staunton had better reasons for his approval. Frank had been now some months in possession of his new charge; and the foreign correspondents of

the firm, some of whom were well acquainted with English, had written privately, and in that language, to Mr. Staunton himself, and expressed in the strongest terms their admiration of the general talents and abilities, and more especially of the thorough acquaintance with the French tongue displayed by his new *employé*.

The old man was delighted. In doing a charitable thing for another, he discovered that he had been doing a wise one for his own interests, and he sounded Frank's praises daily in Mary's ear. For the acquaintance with foreign languages displayed by her old companion, the young heiress was prepared. She had heard of Count Laval at Lady Carpenter's. His eloquence of diction too did not surprise her. She knew that he spoke easily, and it was natural that he should write well.

But what did surprise her, were the eulogiums bestowed upon qualities in which she had hitherto believed Frank to have

been altogether deficient—his energy, his self-denial, his perseverance. Upon these Mary pondered much, and as she pondered became grave; for she began to doubt how far she did not devote a larger portion of her thoughts to the sayings and doings of the foreign correspondent of the firm of Willis and Staunton than was consistent with prudence. She had rejected him on account of certain foibles, and it appeared that the foibles never had, or at least had, no longer an existence. Frank was rising rapidly in the estimation of Mary Staunton.

Besides he had lately and unconsciously obtained a still more favourable place in her good opinion. Frank Delamere was ruined, and Mary—though she coloured at the thought as unworthy of her—had doubted if he might not, admitted as he was to her father's house, take the advantage of the ready approach to her presence thus offered him, and endeavour to repair the misfortunes of the house of Delamere with

the contents of the strong box of his new master. In this also she had found herself in the wrong. From the day of his first introduction to Staunton Lodge, Frank had treated her with the most studied reserve. Whatever then his sins, he was free from that which she had suspected. To her ruined lover, she herself at least was no longer an object.

With regard to her cousin, his intentions appeared not so distinct. On the one hand, his manner upon most occasions exhibited to the daughter of Lord Torrisdale, though in a more modified degree, the same character of chilling politeness which it had presented towards herself; but on the other, it was also true that during that odious rehearsal, there were moments in which he had seemed the most assiduous, the most devoted, and the most passionate of lovers.

If the fact were so, Mary was obliged to confess that it was hardly to be won-

dered at. Lady Margaret, in a pecuniary point of view, might be no great prize, but she was very pretty, very graceful, very handsome, and had besides, high fashion and high rank, and all these excellences the young lady had intimated by her manner distinctly enough, she was willing to bestow on Mr. Delamere if Mr. Delamere would condescend to accept them. To him the match would be an excellent one, for though the fair damsel's wealth was small, her influence was great. Lord Torrisdale doted on his daughter. He was ready to assent to any marriage which she might think fit to make, and was equally ready to provide for his son-in-law by one of the many sinecures or diplomatic appointments which in these happy days, unvexed by the impertinent questions of Joseph Hume, were so lavishly bestowed by the Minister on the *protégés* of his great political partizans. All this Mary knew, and all this she suspected that Frank Delamere

knew also, or at least guessed. Would the foreign corresponding clerk avail or not avail himself of so brilliant an alliance. The young heiress did not know what to make of it. She was puzzled, and people when puzzled, think. The meditations upon that most provoking person, Mr. Francis Delamere, became more constant than ever.

At length her anxieties were to a certain degree relieved. Lady Margaret's visit reached its termination. It had been prolonged infinitely beyond what the visitor herself had originally contemplated, and had indeed for the last three months been continued without any attempt on the part of the mistress of the house, either in manner or language, to encourage her stay. But the daughter of Lord Torrisdale, who was not one to allow her own whims to be affected by the wishes, known or supposed, of those with whom she was brought into contact, had hitherto shown no symptoms

of departure. She went, however, at last. A German Princess had arrived in London, to whom and to whose family her ambassadorial papa wished to repay some attentions which he had formerly received while abroad, and his daughter was summoned to town to assist in the hospitalities of Sackville Street. The parting was cold enough. There were a few fibs told to each other by the fair cousins, and a faint attempt was made at a tear, but there was no scene. Fortunately for the harmony of Staunton Lodge, it was the middle of the week, and Frank was at Manchester.

Mary once more breathed freely. She did not, however, profit much by the change. On the following Saturday, as on those which succeeded it, Frank, for he had now become a regular and weekly visitor, issued as usual from the yellow chariot which every afternoon at five o'clock deposited at the door the old gentleman, his powder, his spectacles and his spencer. But instead of

endeavouring by agreeable conversation to console Miss Staunton for the solitude entailed on her for the loss of her cousin, the young guest devoted himself to turning over portfolios, reading new publications, or, what was worse still, spending the long evenings in discussing with her father the probable arrival of the Heligoland and Gottenburg mails, or the best manner of shipping goods to Cuxhaven.

This was a state of things which the mistress of Staunton Lodge, with all her reading and reflection, had never contemplated. She had, as we have mentioned, been prepared for a further renewal of attentions, and had made up her mind how to act when the attentions were renewed; but she had not anticipated indifference, still less an indifference which, notwithstanding her latter courtesies, appeared to continue fixed, unconcealed, unconquerable. She was first grave, then angry, then piqued.

"I do not want him to make love to

me," said she to herself, "but I certainly did expect that when we had got quit of that silly flirting girl, Margaret Seton, I should have had a little rational conversation with him. He is well acquainted with foreign manners, and foreign celebrities, and he might, even if it had been only from a proper attention to the mistress of the house, taken the trouble of relating to me, as well as to her, some of their histories. Besides, though he is always wrong with his foolish pride of birth, I should have liked to have renewed with him some of our old discussions with regard to the present and the past. I am sure there can be no comparison between their interest and the subject with which he has been delighting, for the last two hours, my father's ears, the merits of that odious clipper schooner 'Nancy,' and the chances that it has of eluding the French Privateers. But I dare say it is all owing to excessive respect. He feels, probably, the

difference between his present position and mine. Poor fellow, I must encourage him."

With this charitable and disinterested object, Mary did encourage him. It was to no purpose. In vain did she introduce the different topics which had been canvassed with eager interest during their solitary rambles at the Hermitage. Her remarks scarcely awakened reply. Frank always answered, to be sure, and with the greatest politeness: but to her, as to Lady Margaret, the answer was always made gravely, and in the fewest words capable of expressing the idea. Mary was in despair.

"Poor fellow!" thought she, "he is evidently heart-broken with his misfortunes. I must do something to cheer him. I must ask Lady Carpenter."

James Staunton never interfered with his daughter's doings, except to approve; and the widow of the Indian Judge received an invitation to Staunton Lodge. It was ac-

cepted, and upon the next Saturday on which Frank paid his accustomed visit, he was delighted on entering the drawing-room, to be received in the arms of his godmother. The good old dame had not seen him since his visit to the Hermitage. How many sad events had occurred since then, and how deeply might they have written their traces on one so young. Lady Carpenter eagerly put on her spectacles, took hold of her young friend by the wrist, and holding him out at arm's length, carefully, and with the anxiety of a woman's affection, scrutinised his face and figure. Apparently, the result was not satisfactory, for the tears came into her eyes.

"My poor boy," said she, and restoring her glasses to their case, she took the arm of the master of the house, and proceeded to the dining-room.

Mary's experiment had evidently failed. The meal was more silent and melancholy than ever. It was in vain that James

Staunton told his best stories. It was in vain that he gratified their ears by what ought to have been interesting intelligence to those who were likely to have a future place at his table, that he had just secured the best pipe of Madeira in the London Docks. Some sombre influence seemed to be at work, for the dinner proceeded not the less languidly, and shortly after the ladies retired to the drawing-room.

Scarcely had its door closed, and the old dame placed herself on the sofa by the fire, than her young hostess took her seat by her side.

"What is the matter with you, my dear Lady Carpenter? You are silent to-day. You are grave. Are you ill?"

Cunning Mary! she said not a word of Frank. But women are born diplomatists, and though she was dying to know what Lady Carpenter thought of his appearance, she was determined that the first mention of his name should come from her aged

friend. Her little stratagem was successful.

"Need you ask, love?" said Lady Carpenter. "That poor boy!"

"Who do you mean?" said her young hostess, with the best affected ignorance in the world. Naughty Mary!

"Why, Frank Delamere to be sure!"

"Oh, Mr. Delamere," said the young lady in a tone intended to convey the idea that he was, for the first time, presented to her mind's eyes. "What of him?"

"Ah, Mary, are you blind? do you not see the change? Is he not pale, thin, looking wretched?"

"You do not think him ill," said the young hostess in a tone of anxiety which even her self-command was unable to conceal.

"Yes, if I may judge from his looks, very ill. If anything were to happen to him, God help his poor mother. Oh, Mary, Mary, you have much to answer for."

"I!"

"Yes, you, Mary. I love you two beings better than anything on earth, and I told you on the morning on which he came to the Hermitage, that it was the dearest wish of my old eyes to see you his wife. Ah, if you had married him, these follies in London would not have taken place, and we might all to-day have been at Delamere Court. How much happier for him? How much happier for you?"

Mary muttered something about her regrets at Mr. Delamere's misfortunes.

"Don't tell me of your regrets," said the old lady. "Don't tell me you could not help it. I know you must have refused him. I know nothing else but a refusal would have made him go off full speed from the Hermitage, without bidding his old godmother good bye."

Mary looked conscious and was silent.

"Ah! my love," said her companion, "you have read much and are wise; but

do not let all this wisdom blind you to your own happiness; I fear the poor boy did not please you, because he had not all that reading which you have, or that perpetual ambition and thirst for labour which mark your worthy father. But he would have made you an excellent husband, and a happy one; and believe an old woman, my love, who has had some experience in the world, when she tells you, that there is more happiness in married life in the quiet interchange of mutual affection, than in all, that the wisdom of the one sex or the ambition of the other, even if successful, can confer."

The tears streamed from Mary's eyes.

"You are angry with me, my dear Lady Carpenter."

"I am not angry with you, Mary. I am sorry for you. With your money, and your talents, and your ambition, you may, I dare say, marry a Prime Minister if you will; but you will never marry any one who

would have rendered you half as happy as that poor lad, whom you have made broken-hearted."

The gentlemen, as usual, were late in finding their way to the drawing-room. When they arrived there, they found Lady Carpenter its sole occupant. Miss Staunton, they were informed, had a head-ache and was gone to bed.

On the following morning, her place was vacant at the breakfast-table. James Staunton became alarmed. The family Galen was sent for. What was the result of the consultation did not transpire; but for the benefit of our readers we will mention, that on the same afternoon a small, six-sided, green bottle, carefully wrapped up in white paper, was duly delivered at Staunton Lodge. Its cork, *secundum artem*, was covered with a piece of kid leather carefully tied round the neck with a bit of red thread. The mysterious packet was labelled, "Miss Staunton."

In the envelope was a sheet of note paper, on which were inscribed certain cabalistic words, terminated by what appeared to be a signature, and which Champollion, or others learned in deciphering hieroglyphics, might have translated into "Andrew Bolus." The words above seemed to be :

"By mixt. camphor . . ℥vi
Tinct. opii . . . ℥i
Sumat unciam tertiis horis."

From which we, the uninitiated, arrive at the conclusion, that the heiress of the cotton-spinner had been put upon a course of camphor julep.

"*O cœca gens mortalium*," says the poet, and he says well. Mary, in the simplicity of her heart, had sent for Lady Carpenter to produce hilarity in the establishment, and the only result of the old dame's arrival had been that everything was at sixes and sevens in Staunton Lodge.

CHAPTER V.

A DISMISSAL.

"*Corb.* I disclaim in him.
Avoc. But for what cause?"

VOLPONE.

Mr. Staunton and Frank returned as usual to Manchester, on Monday morning, but still Mary had not made her appearance. Her illness, however, excited no anxiety, and if the young clerk speculated on it at all, it was merely till they arrived at the counting-house door. Once there, his duties were too real to leave him any time for dreams.

It was about four days after that Mrs. Delamere and the friend of Jung Jow

were seated in the drawing-room at Laurel Cottage. Uncle John, under the double influence of his new wealth and his anxiety to please his sister-in-law, had made sundry changes in his apparel. The military character of his costume was still retained, for he wore the usual dress adopted at the time by officers on half-pay, or out of service—a frock coat, buttoning up to the throat, tight blue pantaloons, and Hessian boots. But he still retained one appendage, which marked his connexion with the East, an immense crimson turban. Mrs. Delamere was busily employed in knitting a comforter, to protect Frank's throat during the nights of the approaching winter, and her brother-in-law was deep in a leading article of the "Morning Chronicle," which proved beyond the power of refutation, that Bonaparte was invincible, and that it was idle for England to attempt any struggle with the colossal power of France.

Suddenly the attention of both was ar-

rested by the violent ringing of the door bell, and upon their looking through the window, a handsome carriage was descried at the gate. Betsy seemed in no hurry to answer the summons. The more they rung, the more she apparently determined not to go. At length, when the bell wire was about to give way before the energy of the footman, the damsel hurried forth in a cap, whose flaming red ribbons, formed a strong contrast to the dirty gown beneath it. She had evidently, however, performed correctly her task of announcing that Mrs. Delamere was at home. The steps were let down, and two ladies were marshalled into the room. They were Lady Carpenter and Mary Staunton.

It may be well understood with what pleasure Mrs. Delamere received her old friend. It would be more difficult to sketch correctly her feelings towards the fair creature who accompanied her. For the moment when Mary was first introduced, one

might have supposed from the deep flush which came over her hostess's countenance, that there was something like a feeling of irritation at her new acquaintance. If it were so, it was but for a moment, for Mrs. Delamere was too just, and too honest in her nature to give such a feeling permanence, and it was with real kindness that she took the hand of her young guest, and made her welcome to Laurel Cottage. As for Uncle John, he doffed his turban, and bowed as then only guardsmen could bow. In a few minutes the party had taken their seats, and the two elder ladies, who had not met for many months, naturally adopted that style of conversation which their long intimacy had made habitual to them.

As for Miss Staunton, she turned her attention to Uncle John; partly from a sentiment of delicacy, because she was aware that Mrs. Delamere and Lady Carpenter must have many confidences to exchange which were not intended for her ear; and

partly, if we may be allowed to guess the feelings of the young heiress, because she was not sorry to have an opportunity of conciliating Frank through the medium of his uncle. The age, the past position, the present, of herself and Frank Delamere, all made it impossible for Mary to make herself very agreeable to the young man, but these objections could not apply to the old one, and the fair lady did her best to win the good opinion of Captain Delamere.

And she succeeded. The attentions of a beautiful girl are always gratifying, and Uncle John evidently felt flattered by her unconcealed anxiety to obtain his good graces. He did not allow himself, however, to be hoodwinked by the beauty of the face before him. He had seen too much of lovely women in his early guardsman's life in London, not to be aware how often their charms are merely on the surface; and he now, with infinite tact, and with a manner

and language which had nothing in common with the blunt phraseology he usually affected, changed repeatedly the subjects of conversation, and did his best to obtain an insight into Miss Staunton's habits and opinions. The labour was not a difficult one, for Mary had nothing to conceal; and there was in fact, allowing for the difference of sex, so great a resemblance between their characters, and so strong a sympathy in their tastes, their energy, their shrewd sense, their independent habits of mind, and their disposition to judge of things as they were, and not as they affected to be, that they soon became great friends.

The visit was agreeable to all parties, and was frequently repeated. Frank never returned from the counting-house till a late hour in the evening; and as there was no chance of meeting him, Mary persuaded herself that neither he, nor any one else, could allege that her frequent morning calls at Laurel Cottage had any other

object than kindness for an amiable woman, who, entitled to attention at all times, had now from her unmerited misfortunes a double claim to it. As upon such occasions, Mrs. Delamere and Lady Carpenter gave themselves up for the most part to familiar chit-chat, the heiress of the cotton-spinner was left to exercise her blandishments as she best chose upon Uncle John. The liking produced at the first interview became strengthened by further acquaintance, and the conversation gradually assumed an almost confidential character. One subject, however, appeared to be avoided by both parties. Mary never mentioned Frank. It might be that the young lady hoped that the subject would be introduced by his uncle. If she did so, she was disappointed. Captain Delamere made no allusion, however indirect, to the misfortunes, the affairs, or the prospects of the house of Delamere, or the members of the family.

In another point, too, the young lady's

little manœuvres were unsuccessful. She felt conscious how much a man like her father would be taken by the shrewd sound sense of Mrs. Delamere and her brother-in-law, and she had obtained Mr. Staunton's consent to ask them to the Lodge. The invitation was politely refused. Mary was not to be vanquished. At his daughter's request, the old gentleman (for he never denied her anything) one day made his appearance at Laurel Cottage in his best gold spectacles, broad-brimmed hat, and a new spencer, and called on Captain and Mrs. Delamere. Uncle John immediately returned the visit, but Mary had not advanced a foot. The invitations which followed to Staunton Lodge were refused as before.

If anybody had asked Mary why she was so anxious to receive under her father's roof Mrs. Delamere and her brother-in-law, she would have replied that it was for the purpose of securing agreeable society to Lady Carpenter and Mr. Staunton, and she

would have been indignant if it had been hinted to her, that Frank had anything to do with so eager a hospitality. It is probable, too, that she thought so. With all your philosophy, and reading, and knowledge, to make such a blunder! Foolish Mary!

It may be easily understood that these repeated visits were the constant subject of conversation in the evenings at Laurel Cottage; and Frank heard with as much pain as pleasure the eulogiums which his relatives passed on Mary Staunton. His mother, indeed, though she did not deny her admiration of their young visitor, from a recollection of the past, and from female delicacy, spoke of her but seldom. Captain Delamere was not so guarded.

"By Jove, Frank!" said he one day, "that cotton-spinning girl is something like a woman! What paces she has got! She is as clean in the pasterns as my pure blood Arab Abdallah, and has got a toss of her

head just like him. And what nous too. By the Lord, boy! that's just the wife to keep a silly, easy-tempered fool like yourself out of mischief. Why don't you pull up your whiskers, I say, and speak a good word for yourself?"

Frank was silent.

"Don't you hear me, boy?"

"I do hear you, uncle, but I cannot suppose that you are serious."

"Not serious! By the black stone of Mecca, I never was more so in my life! Here is a young girl with half a million pinned to her sash, and from what I hear from Lady Carpenter, you are as grave and as distant towards her as if she had got the plague!"

"Well, Sir," said Frank, "if I must answer you, it is precisely because she has got the half million, that I pay her no attention."

"Pooh! pooh! is she not a fine girl?"

"Lovely!" said Frank with enthusiasm.

"And brains enough for a bishop."

"I am the last person, my dear uncle, to dispute the talents, or the accomplishments of Miss Staunton."

"Well, Sir, and if she possess all these talents, and accomplishments, and beauty, what more would you have?"

"Nothing more. On the contrary—for from you, uncle, I can conceal nothing—I do not think there is so perfect a being upon earth as Mary Staunton, and all that this world can offer would not give me half as much happiness as the right to call her my wife."

"Then why the devil don't you marry her?"

"It is not probable that she would marry me; but even if she were disposed to do so, should I accept her?"

"The boy is mad, utterly mad," said Uncle John, starting up, and pacing the room as if he possessed the seven-leagued boots.

"No, uncle, I am not mad; but I do (I will not say at what sacrifice of feeling) what I ought to do. I am living upon Mr. Staunton's bounty. Do you think that I should act right if, in return for his kindness, I attempted to gain the affections of his child?"

There was silence for about a minute. It was broken by Mrs. Delamere:

"Yes, Uncle John, I must take part against you. Frank is quite right. He acts as he should do. So long as he is a clerk at Mr. Staunton's, he is not entitled to do his employer such an injury; for Mr. Staunton would consider it an injury were he to win Mary's affections."

"All humbug! Madam Delamere," said the Captain. "Do you think that people should not marry, unless they have exactly the same number of rupees in their pockets?"

"I think nothing of the sort. Happiness is the great object of marriage, and happiness is best insured by mutual affection. If one of the parties has fortune, it is enough."

"You don't, then, Madam Delamere, object to Frank's making love to the girl, because she has plenty of cash, and he has not a six-pence?"

"No! Were he in any other profession, or indeed in any other employment but Mr. Staunton's, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see him woo and win Mary for his wife; but so long as he is clerk to her father, I should conceive it treacherous in him to take advantage of the intimacy which his confidential position offers, and use the kindness of his employer as a means for doing him, what Mr. Staunton would consider an irreparable injury."

"And what do you say to this, young Sir?"

"That my mother is perfectly right," replied Frank.

"And you," retorted his uncle, "if you were in some other profession, and had the means of supporting a wife, would you still stand shilly-shallying with this girl?"

"You have asked me the question frankly, uncle, and as frankly will I answer it. If I had an income derived from any other source than Mr. Staunton's pocket, and one which, however small, would set my wife above privation, I would work heaven and earth to win the hand of Mary Staunton."

"Then, by Jove! lad," said Uncle John, "you may pack up your shirts when you like, for I am determined you shan't be long at the cotton-spinner's."

The Captain was evidently in such a state of excitement, that neither his sister-in-law nor his nephew thought it necessary to make any reply. The worthy friend of Jung Jow endeavoured to assuage his wrath, by swallowing consecutively three strong tumblers of brandy-punch. They did not appear, however, to have exercised any beneficent influence on his temper, for shortly after, he walked off to bed, without saying good night.

On the following morning, Mrs. Dela-

mere and Frank descended to the breakfast-room; but there was no appearance of Uncle John.

Mrs. Delamere rang the bell.

"Betsy," said she to the ruddy-faced attendant, who answered the summons, "tell Captain Delamere we are waiting for him."

"Lord, Ma'am! I thought you'd a know'd it, but the Captain's agone to Lunnun by the morning's coach."

There was nothing for it then, but for the mother and son to discuss the meal themselves. Both felt that in his present temper it was better perhaps that Uncle John should renew his labours in the unknown tongues, and give the benefit of his powers as a linguist to the Professors of Haileybury.

In about a week the traveller came back. He had apparently recovered his good humour, for he welcomed his sister-in-law and nephew with his usual blunt kindness.

Some few days after, the party were col-

lected in the evening round the drawing-room fire. Frank had returned from the office, and was engaged with his uncle in a game of chess, while Mrs. Delamere devoted herself to her usual employment, that of culling the cream of the "Morning Chronicle," which in the earlier part of the day was monopolised by Captain Delamere.

"Frank," said the old lady, "here is a paragraph that will interest you. You remember your grandfather's friend, Sir John St. Paul?"

"Perfectly," said her son.

"Here is something about him," continued Mrs. Delamere; and she read as follows:

"'We understand that Sir John St. Paul has retired from public life. The venerable Baronet has for some years been suffering from bad health; and as he felt his representative duties too onerous for his age, he has accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. Sir John has for many years sat for Delamere,

a close borough, which was understood to have been in the power of the late Mr. Delamere, of Delamere Court. As the large Delamere estate has lately been sold, and the influence which that family has hitherto exercised over the voters no longer exists, it has not as yet transpired who is likely to be Sir John's successor. It is understood that a writ will be immediately issued. The election will probably take place about the 15th of next month.' "

" Ay! how! what is that, Madam Delamere?" said the Captain, looking up from his game. " Be so good as let me hear that over again."

Mrs. Delamere complied.

The Captain gave one of his unamiable coughs.

" Humph!" said he. " Frank, there's part of the mess that you have made of it. If you had married that sensible girl, Mary Staunton, you never would have been wheedled into ruining yourself by that

plausible, smooth-tongued chap, who was always talking about his honour and his character. I shall never recover my temper as long as I live;" and the worthy Captain pushed away the chess-table in a pet, compounded for himself a tumbler of brandy pawnee, swallowed it at a draught, and walked off to bed.

Poor Frank was crushed to the earth by the unkind reminiscences which his uncle had called up, but he was soon destined to have fresh need for his philosophy. The election as the "Chronicle" had suggested, had, in fact, been fixed for the 15th, and on the succeeding day, about an hour after he had proceeded to the office, Mrs. Delamere was horror-struck to see her son rush into the drawing-room, breathless with agitation, and pale as death.

"Heaven bless me!" said she, "what, my dear boy, is the matter?"

"Oh, mother!" gasped forth her son, 'some person has been doing me an injury

with Mr. Staunton. He has discharged me from his service, and told me never again to appear in his sight."

"But what is the cause of this?"

"That is the most mysterious part of the business. I cannot even guess."

"And did not Mr. Staunton tell you?"

"No; and he would not even listen with patience, when I asked him the occasion of his violence. Nay, more, he would not allow me to remain one minute within his door, and said that the head clerk would send me a cheque for any balance of salary that might be due to me."

The parties looked at each other in mute astonishment.

"Oh, mother! mother!" said Frank, "I have committed many follies, but this, at least, is not my work. God knows that I have laboured in that office, honestly, steadily, untiringly, and to the very best of my ability," and the poor lad sunk upon a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"Ho, ho, ho!" said a voice from the corner of the room, "what the devil's in the wind now?"

Frank and his mother turned round, and there, by the window which he had entered from the garden, stood Captain Delamere. The face and figure were those of his race, but there was something about the satirical eye and mocking mouth, that made poor Frank almost doubt, while he gazed, if for the moment the great enemy of mankind had not invested himself with the lineaments of Uncle John.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONTESTED ELECTION.

"1*st. Officer*. Come, come, they are almost here.
How many stand for Consulships?
2*nd. Officer*. Three, they say."

CORIOLANUS.

We must once more transfer our scene to the town of Delamere. The little borough had much the appearance of a large lunatic asylum. Its inhabitants—man, woman, and child—were engaged heart and soul in a contested election; and since the days when the charter of Edward III. gave to the citizens the power of contributing two burgesses to the collective wisdom of the nation, there never had been a period at which the honour of representing the

little town had been more eagerly sought after.

And yet but a few days previously such a thing as a contest for the vacant seat had appeared improbable.

The representation of Delamere had for centuries been considered as a portion of the inheritance of the lords of Delamere Court. Frank's grandfather had himself filled the seat for above five and twenty years, and when, from age and embarrassment, he had become unequal to the fatigue or the expense, he by his influence had placed an old friend, Sir John St. Paul, in the vacant chair. That gentleman, as it may be remembered, had lately accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. No person had appeared in his room, and the Borough of Delamere seemed likely to be the prey of the first occupant. And this was so much the more probable as, from Delamere Court having been purchased in the name, if not by the firm of a banking-house in London,

no effort had been made to keep up the influence hitherto exercised over the electors by the Delamere estate.

It was under these circumstances that a plan was devised in the little borough for emancipating themselves from the feudal thraldom to which, in past time they had been subjected.

The plan of course was conceived by an attorney. The men of parchments are the parties who ever derive the greatest benefit from contested elections, and who for the most part exercise complete control over the internal politics of provincial towns, and the general rule met with no exception in Delamere. Mr. Tom Smith, who was recognised within its limits as the head of the legal profession, and who was, moreover, the agent for the Delamere family, and for many of the neighbouring county magistrates, had hitherto, in producing to the electors his patron's nominees, managed matters much as he had pleased;—a system which

had materially affected the bill of his brother practitioner, and rival, Mr. Stubbs.

So long as the Delameres possessed Delamere Court, to offer opposition to their claims would have been idle. Their great estate, their high connexions, their popular personal qualities (for they were a handsome race, and it is the legitimate privilege of electors' wives and daughters to be kissed by candidates at elections), the very habit of obedience on the part of the burgesses to their feudal lord, all had made the return of themselves, or the man they supported, certain and easy. And Mr. Stubbs groaned in spirit as he calculated in his own mind the amount of the bill which Mr. Tom Smith would be able to make out for his legal services. He now felt, however, that the time was come, when by judicious management he might not only be able to transfer a portion of the profits to his own pocket, but possibly have the still greater pleasure of ousting his rival from that superiority, which he had hitherto

enjoyed as principal legal practitioner in Delamere. The great territorial principality in the neighbourhood, was apparently without an owner, and the recognised right which up to that moment it had possessed, of selecting a member, if not abandoned, seemed at least no longer exercised. The borough had in fact become an open borough. It was ready to pass into the hands of the best bidder, and Mr. Stubbs felt that if he could be the fortunate individual, who was to discover the political Crœsus disposed to be its purchaser, he would have no difficulty in diverting into his own pockets a good deal of the golden stream, which then, as now, was understood to inundate the residences of free and independent electors. The only difficulty was to find a man, who at the same time that he had a connection, however insignificant with the town, was able to satisfy the craving for filthy lucre of the burgesses and Mr. Stubbs.

The search of the keen-eyed notary was

not long. On the banks of the estuary behind Delamere, and on the Houghton farm, the loss of which had been such an object of mortification to Frank's grandfather, Mr. Staunton had built a cottage. It was intended, and had been used, by the new proprietor and his family, for sea-bathing quarters. The great manufacturer had thus become connected with the borough —he was enormously rich; he was understood to be ambitious—and if he could be induced to undertake the representation, he possessed all those qualities of mind and purse, which were respectively thought essential in an M.P. by the public of England, and the electors of Delamere.

Mr. Stubbs decided that he should be the man; and having privately received assurances of support from two or three leading members of the commercial interest of the little sea-port, he communicated with Mr. Staunton, and offered him the borough.

The offer was graciously accepted. The

cotton-spinner had not forgotten his loss of the Delamere estate. His anxiety for its purchase had been materially stimulated by its possession of political influence, and he felt that if he could make himself the representative of Delamere, he should at once recover much of what he had lost, and at the same time have the pleasure of depriving his competitor for the proprietorship of Delamere Court, of what was the most valuable appendage to the domain.

Mr. Staunton thus entered eagerly into the views of Mr. Stubbs. The attorney was instructed to make all preparations for his return. He was empowered to spend money freely in securing it; but was specially warned that his new patron, though not unwilling to be liberal in expenditure, would under no circumstances suffer himself to be proposed, unless the representation of the borough was a matter of certainty.

Mr. Stubbs read, pondered, and acted. After four-and-twenty hours anxious inves-

tigation, through the medium of emissaries scattered over the town, he ascertained that there seemed no disposition on the side of the Tory party to bring forward a representative—that the banking-house which had purchased Delamere Court had refused to stir—and that any man who was possessed largely of the sinews of war, and disposed to dispense them freely, was likely to walk over the course. Mr. Stubbs hesitated no longer. On the following morning, the town was covered with placards, in which in letters of thirty-two line type the inhabitants were informed that Mr. James Staunton, of Staunton Lodge, intended to solicit the votes of the free and independent electors of Delamere.

The town was immediately in a ferment. The old clique which had hitherto held the power in their own hands were in consternation. It was in vain that Miss Martha Blount hurried from house to house, and expatiated upon the disgrace of allowing

the borough to be taken possession of by a cotton-spinner. It was in vain that Mr. Toppings, ever aristocratic from his connection with royalty, looked as if such a degradation were sufficient to bring the world to an end. There was evidently nothing to be done. Mr. Tom Smith gave them no consolation. He did not, indeed, say anything of the failure of his hopes in procuring a rival candidate; but he was silent, and Mr. Tom Smith's silence was eloquence.

In the meantime the nomination day arrived. As there was no doubt of Mr. Staunton's being elected without opposition, that gentleman had not thought fit to make his appearance in person. Mr. Stubbs had assured him that an hour would settle the whole matter, and had already ordered a handsome dinner to be prepared at "The Jolly Smugglers," (the inn which was the head-quarters of his party), to enable the committee and the friends of the new M.P.

to celebrate, in an agreeable manner, his success. It had indeed been whispered to the worthy attorney, that a gentleman in a postchaise had arrived at a late hour on the preceding evening, and had proceeded directly to the residence of Mr. Tom Smith. It was added, too, that the traveller had immediately been closeted with him for upwards of an hour, and that the result of the deliberation had been to send for the parson and Mr. Toppings, who in their turn had not found their way home till near midnight. All this was mysterious enough, but Mr. Stubbs still felt that there might be a thousand means of explaining the arrival and the conference, without connecting either with the election.

"Bah!" said he to himself; "who's afraid? I am instructed to spare no expense, and if Tom Smith went all over England, he could not find a man whose pocket could stand a tussle with Mr. James Staunton's."

In the meantime the important moment

approached. The hustings were erected in front of the Town-Hall, and were ornamented with banners blazoned with words "Staunton for ever!" "Staunton and independence!" "Staunton and trade!" By the efforts of Mr. Stubbs, a glorious mob had been collected below. The landlord of "The Jolly Smugglers" had entrusted it in confidence on the preceding evening to about fifty of his best customers, that he intended to tap for *gratis* distribution a dozen hogsheads of strong ale on the following day, and the thirsty population were now prepared by the exercise of their "most sweet voices" to prove that they deserved the expected gratification.

The hustings themselves were crowded. There, of course, was Mr. Stubbs, wearing upon his left breast a knot of purple and orange ribbon, large enough to have decorated appropriately the Giantess in Tom Thumb, and Mr. Drugget the grocer, and Mr. Sims the mercer, and other fast friends

of Mr. Stubbs. And there, to the astonishment of the little notary, was Mr. Tom Smith.

"What the devil brings him here?" said Stubbs to himself; "and here, faith, comes Parson Delmington and that fool Toppings; I wonder if they can have a man in their pocket. I'll pump them."

The triumvirate, however, were not to be pumped. In reply to Mr. Stubbs's supposition, that there was to be a contested election, Mr. Tom Smith only laughed one of his horse laughs; and after his usual playful fashion, when in good humour, punched with his forefinger Mr. Stubbs' ribs.

The Parson was less energetic, but equally mysterious. He smiled, showed his teeth, and said "indeed;" while Mr. Toppings put on his royal air, and made a bow dignified enough to have done credit to the Prince of Wales.

"Close as wax I see," said Stubbs to

himself. "However, if there is a mystery in the case, we must soon learn it."

In the meantime, the Town Clerk had read the Speaker's writ for the election. When it was finished, the returning officer, with a graceful bow to Mr. Stubbs, begged to know if there were any person who was ready to propose a gentleman as a proper representative for the ancient borough of Delamere.

Thereupon Mr. Drugget stood forward. The worthy man began by assuring his fellow-townsmen that he was unaccustomed to public speaking, and the frequent pauses in his oratory proved to his fellow-townsmen that he literally spoke the truth. He said (as far as could be learned from the report in the newspaper next day, for it was difficult to gather any consecutive sense from the oration as delivered), that the ancient borough of Delamere had long been considered the property of a private family; that circumstances had fortunately released them from

this thraldom; that they were now independent; and that to ensure that independence for the future, he was about to propose to them, as a proper representative, a gentleman whose great wealth was well known, and whose mercantile and commercial knowledge and engagements especially qualified him to represent a sea-port which was dependent for its prosperity on its trade. He would propose their worthy neighbour—he had almost said their fellow-townsman—Mr. Staunton, of Staunton Lodge.

He was followed by Mr. Sims, the mercer. The man of broadcloths had a great respect for Mr. Drugget's wealth, and a sincere liking for Mr. Drugget's port wine. Of the four sentences, therefore, which composed his speech, and which he had carefully studied and got by heart, three were entirely expended in eulogizing Mr. Drugget's hospitality, and investing him with all the cardinal virtues; the fourth was devoted to seconding the nomination.

There was a dead pause. The returning officer bowed to Mr. Stubbs and smiled, and Mr. Stubbs bowed to the returning officer, and smiled in return.

"I understand, gentlemen," said the great official to the crowd, "that my duty is an easy one. I am informed—"

What his information was, was unhappily lost to posterity, as at this moment his elbow was touched by Mr. Delmington, the clergyman, who said, "that before the worthy returning officer concluded his address to the electors, he had a candidate to propose."

With the words, he advanced to the front of the hustings.

Mr. Delmington stated, that he did not dispute Mr. Staunton's claims to a seat in the House of Commons—that that gentleman had notoriously great wealth, high mercantile character, and a thorough acquaintance with the complicated transactions of trade, but that he objected to him on three grounds—first, that although he possessed

information and experience, he understood he was unable to communicate readily his ideas to others—secondly, that from his age he had not the physical strength sufficient for the laborious attention to public business, which the duties of Parliament, if efficiently discharged, required—and thirdly, that he was absolutely a stranger to them. Now, gentlemen," said the reverend speaker, "I am about to propose to you one who is subject to none of these disadvantages; a man whose information, though of a different class, is not inferior to Mr. Staunton's; a man who has health, youth, ambition; who is an accomplished scholar; who is likely to be an eloquent public speaker, but who, above all, is personally known to you; who has been brought up amongst you; who has been almost born amongst you; and with whose family, through the ties of mutual affection and good-will, you have been connected for centuries. I propose, as your representative, Mr. Francis Delamere, late of Delamere Court."

CHAPTER VII.

UNEXPECTED HONOURS.

"Let him be Consul."

CORIOLANUS.

It was on the second morning after the events which we have commemorated in the last chapter, that the little party was assembled as usual in the drawing-room at Laurel Cottage.

Frank was seated in a chair near the window with a book in his hand, but it was evident that its contents had failed in riveting his attention, for his eyes wandered, and their melancholy glance showed that his mind was still occupied by the overwhelming disaster of his expulsion from Mr. Staunton's.

Mrs. Delamere was employed with her knitting, though as from time to time she cast an anxious glance at her son, it seemed that she too was more occupied with the catastrophe of the preceding day than by what appeared her more prominent occupation. As for Uncle John, he was pacing up and down the room, evidently in a state of extreme impatience.

"I wonder what the devil has become of the postman," said the worthy Captain. "I suspect that his Majesty's mail must have capsized, for here it is now eleven o'clock and no appearance of him yet. Ha!" continued he, as the red-coated functionary was seen advancing through the little lawn towards the door, "here is the rascal at last."

The double rap was given. The ubiquitous Betsy answered it, and immediately after entered the room, bearing three letters and the newspapers. All were for the Captain. He eagerly grasped the letters.

"I must to my correspondence," said he. "I wonder if these stupid blockheads have found an investment yet for my fifteen hundred pounds. Who wants the papers? what say you, Madam Delamere?"

Mrs. Delamere was busy with her worsted work, and would read them at night.

"Well, Frank, what say you?"

Frank had a head-ache, and took no interest in the newspaper.

Uncle John put the despised "Morning Chronicle" and "Courier" on the table by his side, and proceeded with his letters. He perused them carefully.

"Confound them," said he, "no investment for the fifteen hundred pounds yet. Before I get it laid out, I shall have spent fifty per cent of it on postages with regard to the securities. Now for a man of small fortune, that is what I call pleasant. Come, let us see what that chap, Boney, is about," and with the words he tore the envelope from one of the papers.

Scarcely had he unfolded it, when he gave a shout so loud that both sister-in-law and nephew turned towards him in astonishment.

"What is the matter, Uncle John?" said they both in a breath.

"What is the matter, Frank!" said he, turning to his nephew. "Upon my soul I am astonished at your impudence in asking the question. So this is the cause of your row with Staunton! Well, I don't wonder at the old chap's being out of humour at such a trick."

"Quarrel with Mr. Staunton! trick!" said Frank, starting to his feet. "What do you mean?"

"You don't know, eh?"

"I pledge you my word of honour. I cannot even guess."

"Then the sooner you learn the better, for here you have it at full length." And the Captain, with measured accentuation, read from the newspaper as follows:

"DELAMERE ELECTION.—By special express we learn that the nomination of candidates for the borough took place yesterday. It has been privately known for some days that Mr. Staunton, the wealthy head of the great manufacturing house of Willis and Staunton, was about to offer himself to the electors, and as his immense fortune necessarily ensured a very expensive contest in case of opposition, it was up to the last moment generally understood that he would walk the course. It has turned out, however, that the wiseacres were wrong. Mr. Staunton was indeed proposed by Mr. Drugget, a wealthy merchant of the borough, and seconded by Mr. Sims. But just as the returning officer was about to declare that gentleman duly elected, Mr. Delmington, the rector of the parish, stepped forward to the front of the hustings, and stated that he had another candidate to propose for the honour of representing the burgesses, Mr. Francis Delamere, late of Delamere Court. Mr.

Delmington's nomination was seconded by Mr. Toppings, in what appeared to be a speech of great eloquence, though unfortunately from the yells of the Staunton party accompanied by the, to us unintelligible cry of "Down with the tailor!" the only part of the oration which our reporter was able to catch, was something about the honourable gentleman's connexion with the royal family. As soon as the tumult was in some degree abated, the returning officer asked for a show of hands. It was in favour of Mr. Staunton. A poll was then demanded on behalf of Mr. Delamere. The following day, that on which we now write was fixed for the election. It is anticipated the struggle will be a severe one, as both the candidates seem to be abundantly supplied with the sinews of war. Indeed, every public-house had been thrown open, and as far as our reporter could learn, the contest will be one of the most expensive which has ever taken place in

England. It is conducted on the part of Mr. Staunton by Mr. Stubbs, and on that of Mr. Delamere by Mr. Thomas Smith. As for the candidates, neither of them appeared on the hustings, and as far as our private advices inform us, were not in the town."

Uncle John stopped, and the parties looked at each other in silent amazement.

"Well, Frank," said Captain Delamere, "do you still mean to tell me you know nothing of the matter?"

"Yes, I but repeat what I said before; I am as ignorant of it as you are."

"And what do you intend doing? Sneak back to old Staunton's office again?"

"I trust not," said Mrs. Delamere. "After Mr. Staunton's violence, I trust Frank will do nothing of the sort."

"No, mother," said Frank; "you need have no fears upon that head. I will never

degrade myself by putting foot for the future within his doors. But I will write to Mr. Smith, and express to him my astonishment at my having been put up for the borough, and that (as he knows right well) so far from having the means of paying the expenses of the election; I have not even the funds necessary to support myself if elected. I shall request him accordingly to withdraw my name from the contest, and allow Mr. Staunton to be elected unopposed."

"Quite right, boy—quite right," said Captain Delamere, approvingly; "be always on the square. So sit down and write your letter to Tom Smith, and I will put it into the post-office for you myself. I must send answers about the investment of that confounded fifteen hundred pounds, and will post all our epistles together. It will be killing two birds with one stone."

The missives of uncle and nephew were accordingly written, and Captain De-

lamere duly deposited them in the post-office.

Two days afterwards came an answer from Mr. Tom Smith. It was in these words:

"Delamere, March 19, 1805.

"Dear Sir,

"I am this morning favoured with yours of the 18th ultimo, announcing your surprise at your nomination, your unwillingness to contest the borough, and your inability to defray the expenses of the contest. With reference to the first part of your instructions, I am sorry to be obliged to say, that they come too late to follow them. The Tory party in Delamere, which has always supported the claims of your family to represent it, would feel themselves painfully compromised by your withdrawal; as, from their present inability to find another candidate who would represent their views, they would have the mortification of seeing

the borough, were you to leave them, delivered, bound hand and foot, to their political opponents. They refuse therefore to listen to your wish to abandon the contest. At the same time, I am instructed to add, that you have nothing to fear from the expense, as they will undertake to provide all the monies necessary, and I hereby give you my personal guarantee that the election shall not cost you a farthing.

"I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"THOMAS SMITH."

"Trumps, by Jove! — regular trumps, those chaps at Delamere!" said the Captain. "Why the Golden Age is revived, Frank or at any rate, the age of gold, which is the same thing, for I warrant keeping those beer-shops open for fifteen days will cost a trifle or two. And I say, Frank, that attorney fellow is quite right; it would not

be fair, after the public spirit which those friends of our family have shown in bringing you forward, to leave them in the lurch. So if they will make you M.P., an M.P. you must be."

"But, my dear Sir, I have not the means of supporting myself."

"Pooh, pooh! we must try and get them. You got a cheque yesterday from the clerk of that cotton-spinning fellow, did not you?"

"Yes."

"What was it for?"

"The half year's salary for my foreign clerkship just due."

"What is the amount of it?"

"One hundred and fifty pounds."

"Well, you know I have got three fifty pound-notes for translating that confounded lingo for those chaps in Leadenhall Street. There is three hundred. And rather than see you stuck in the mud, I will take five hundred off my fifteen hundred

pounds. That will make eight hundred, and that with economy will last you for three years to come. Something may perchance turn up in the meantime, and it is soon enough to vex ourselves about the future when the future comes. So I will write to this Tom Smith fellow, that provided it don't cost you a farthing he may go on with the election."

Frank was too broken-spirited to contest the matter, and allowed Uncle John to have his own way.

Indeed it might have been supposed that Captain Delamere was the person, and not his nephew, whose future fortunes were in the scales of fate. The friend of Jung Jow, during the fifteen days which the contest lasted, was in a perpetual fidget—paced up and down the drawing-room, like a lion in a cage—wrote numberless letters to Tom Smith—committed the extravagance of ordering down for the month an evening paper, and terminated each day's anxieties

by doubling the quantity of his brandy pawnee. As for Mrs. Delamere, doubtful what to hope or what to fear, she worked more steadily at her knitting than ever, sometimes betrayed into a smile at the enthusiasm and extravagance of Uncle John, but more frequently allowing her eyes to dwell upon her son, who, seated as usual by the window, with his unread book upon his knee, gazed sadly and thoughtfully at the garden, evidently forgetful that at the moment his name was the rallying cry of half the drunken population of Delamere.

At length came the eventful day which was to announce the result of the contest. Uncle John was up and dressed by seven o'clock, and Betsy, whose political enthusiasm had never been permitted to interfere with her slumbers, was aroused from her couch a full hour earlier by the hubbub created by the worthy Captain, as he moved from room to room, like a troubled spirit in a haunted abbey. At his express request,

breakfast was put upon the table at eight, and half an hour after the party moved into the drawing-room, ready to receive the bulletin of the result. To lose not a moment in ascertaining its character, Uncle John furthermore posted himself at the garden-gate, and there, with what the Yankees call "a long nine" in his mouth, paced and puffed, in the expectation of the arrival of the red-coated functionary of Lombard Street. His two relatives, with more philosophy, or to use the proper word, with more indifference, watched his proceedings from the window.

The postman came at last. Uncle John snatched the letters from his hand, cast a glance at the addresses, uttered a shout that might have been heard at the end of the street, and rushed into the house.

"There," said he; "there, Frank, is Tom Smith's letter. Let us hear what the attorney chap says."

Frank took the epistle. It was addressed

Francis Delamere, Esq., M.P. The contents were as follow:

"Dear Sir,

"I have just time to save the post. I am happy to inform you of our success. You have been returned for Delamere, after a severe contest, and with a majority over Mr. Staunton of twenty-seven. I shall write full particulars by to-morrow's mail.

"Your obedient servant,

"T. Smith."

The following morning brought the promised letter and the newspapers. They gave in detail the history of the termination of the struggle, but they added nothing to the important information already possessed.

Frank was M.P. for Delamere.

CHAPTER VIII.

THINGS MEND.

"Where should he have this gold!"

TIMON OF ATHENS.

"WELL, Frank," said the Captain, as he sat that evening sipping his brandy pawnee, "when are you thinking of exhibiting yourself as a legislator? The sooner you get into your new work the better, especially after the public feeling shown by those splendid fellows, your supporters. By Jove, they must be a set of chaps with their pockets pretty well lined, for I will warrant the Master Bonifaces at Delamere have sent them in some bills that will astonish them a bit. In this most constitutional country, the

free and independent electors have a thirst that is positively wonderful."

"That, my dear uncle, must depend upon my mother."

"Well, if it depend upon me," said Mrs. Delamere, "Frank cannot go for a week at the soonest. There are certain arrangements with regard to shirting and washing which you gentlemen know nothing about."

"In that case, Madam Delamere," said the Captain, "you may as well say a month, for we shall have the Easter recess upon us in five days, and the house will not meet until after the holidays. And now as to the mopusses, Frank," continued his Uncle, "there are the three fifty pound notes, which I received for translating the charges of the Tea-caddy folks; with your own one hundred and fifty pounds you will have three hundred pounds, which must last you for the first year. At the end of it, if nothing better turns up, I must take a slice off my capital to keep you on your legs, though I

tell you, lad, it will limit somewhat my purchases of Latakia."

Fortunately, the slice off the capital was not required. Before a week was over, Frank received a letter from his banker, which created even a greater sensation at Laurel Cottage than the article in the "Morning Chronicle," which had first announced to the ci-devant clerk of Mr. Staunton that he was canvassing the electors of Delamere.

"Lombard Street.

"Sir,

"We have to inform you, that we have just had ten thousand pounds paid to your account, where it lies to await your further orders. It was accompanied by the very extraordinary letter, a copy of which we subjoin.

"We have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servants,

"SNICKS, SNIGGLETON, AND CO."

(Copy of enclosed letter).

"A CASE OF CONSCIENCE."

"Coleman Street, Lothbury. ›

"Gentlemen,

"It may be, perhaps, within your knowledge that at different times certain sums of money were paid to the late General Delamere, by some of the native princes, whose interests he successfully supported during his command in India. It so chanced that to this fund several additions should have been made which were not made. Amongst others, an Indian correspondent of ours, whose name we are not permitted to give, has intimated to us that, under circumstances which it is unnecessary to enlarge upon, it was his duty to have contributed to the fund in question from himself, or as the agent of others, a sum which, together with lapsed interest, amounts to ten thousand pounds. He now seeks to make amends for his neglect, and has instructed us to pay to General Delamere,

or, in the event of his decease, to his children, the said monies. We have learned that General Delamere is dead—that he has left only one child, Mr. Francis Delamere, and that your house is the one which has been, and is the money agent of that family. We accordingly are ready to pay into your hands the ten thousand pounds, for the benefit of the said Mr. Francis Delamere, upon your furnishing us with the proper receipts.

"Your obedient servants,

"WIGGINS AND CO.,

"Solicitors."

"P.S. We have the honour to add, that we have furnished the receipts in question, and now hold the money for your benefit.

"SNICKS, SNIGGLETON AND CO."

It may be well understood the amazement with which this letter was listened to. The silence was first broken by Uncle John.

"A bam," said the worthy Captain, "a regular quiz. I wonder those bank chaps lend themselves to such a bare-faced humbug. I say Frank, you had better write to those Lombard Street fellows, and tell them you don't like being played upon. Faith I would add that I was an M.P., and that playing tricks with a member of the House of Commons is nothing less than a breach of privilege."

Frank did take his uncle's advice, and addressed a letter to the banking firm in Lombard Street, though without saying any thing of the superior atrocity of the offence in consequence of his being a member of the legislature. For once, however, Captain Delamere was wrong. By return of post came a letter from Messrs. Snicks, Sniggleton and Co., to state that their first missive contained merely matter of fact, and that though they were as much surprised as Mr. Delamere at the cause assigned for the payment of so large a sum, yet that it was

not the less true that the money was in their hands, and waited Mr. Delamere's orders. There was nothing then left for it but to rejoice in the good fortune, which had so unexpectedly displayed itself, and to decide as to the mode in which the newly acquired funds should be appropriated.

"By Jove, Frank," said Uncle John, "it never rains but it pours. Not a week since you beat the Cotton Spinning fellow at Delamere, and now you have got a lac of rupees —enough to make you a nabob. All that you require now to render you as lucky as Fortunatus in the Fairy Tale, is to get that slapping girl, that is so well set upon her pins, that cotton fellow's daughter."

What were Frank's intentions with regard to the cotton fellow's daughter, he did not think necessary to communicate—and to turn the conversation asked what he was to do with the money which had so unexpectedly found its way into his pockets.

"By Jove!" said Uncle John, "that's

simple enough. "Pay off the thousand pounds you owe, and as for the nine thousand that remain invest them at once."

"Invest them at once, uncle!" said Frank. "That is no such easy matter. You have been about two years trying to invest your fifteen hundred pounds, and as far as I can learn, are not a bit further advanced than you were when you first sold your diamonds."

"Pooh! pooh! boy!" said the Captain, with a half laugh, "that is the very reason I give the advice. Profit, child, by the errors of your elders. I think I have been a shade too particular in the selection of my security; so you had better not stand shilly-shally, but just buy with your money into the consols. They will give you five per cent, and four hundred and fifty pounds a year should put you in clover. The three hundred pounds which you have in your pocket will give you an outfit. You will need a horse too. So remember you devote my three fifty pieces

of paper to its purchase. The cotton spinning girl will be riding in the park, and it might mortify her, you know, that her father's clerk was not as well mounted as his neighbours ;" and Uncle John accompanied the termination of his speech by one of those grins peculiar to him, and from which it was impossible to guess whether he intended his words to be taken in jest or in earnest.

In the main, however, Captain Delamere's recommendation was adopted. The one thousand pound debt was paid off. The nine thousand pounds were invested in the five per cents, and Frank, as soon as Mrs. Delamere had got her part of his furnishing prepared, started for London.

Three weeks were still to elapse before Parliament met, and the young legislator employed them well. He had feared that during the years that had passed since he left college, removed as he had been from any communion with the great world, he must have lost many of those qualifications which were neces-

sary to fit him for an orator and a statesman. He was wrong. In the office of Mr. Staunton, he might no doubt have forgotten, to a certain extent his classical knowledge or his historical associations, for the Mr. Thompsons and Mr. Smiths, of the establishment never quoted Horace, and knew nothing of the origin of the Dorians, or the invasion of the Heracleids. But Frank found, to his infinite delight, that he had gained something that was much more useful.

The oratory of the days of Chatham had gone by. Speeches which had depended for their power upon brilliancy of language, poetical allusion or quotation, and appeals to the passions, had ceased to fascinate. Men had become less classical and more real. They attached consequence to the jewel, rather than to its setting. They cared not for words, but for ideas; and gave their respect not to him, who pleased their ears by happiness of intonation or beauty of style, but to him whose less ornate matter supplied them with facts,

and enabled them to form a just judgment by bringing within their grasp the true materials upon which that judgment would eventually and necessarily rest.

For all such knowledge Frank found that the counting-house of Mr. Staunton had been an excellent school. Had he gone into the House of Commons direct from the University, he would probably have failed as a successful speaker, for he would have carried with him only fluency and acquaintance with classics and history. These were qualities eminent indeed in themselves, but they were qualities which were shared in common with him by three-fourths of his fellows within the walls of St Stephen's; and excellences which are possessed by all, are seldom highly valued in any. Besides, the information was essentially theoretical in its character. It was no doubt a mass of facts in the history of the past, but it was nearly useless for the present; for though history has been defined as philosophy teaching by example, it is

wanting in this, that it can teach only through the medium of deductions, and those deductions are as various as the information, the minds, or the physical temperament of the parties who form them. And thus it is that historical or classical knowledge furnishes little that is valuable to the modern debater, because though it supplies a thousand points upon which men were agreed a thousand years ago, it supplies none on which at the present moment there exists a similar unanimity.

And it was in this that the counting-house at Manchester gave Frank advantages. The information which it bestowed was free alike from the vagueness, and the inapplicability which marked the more fashionable lore of the universities. Its facts were present facts. Its objects were real objects. Its interests were interests which affected the good or evil of the living generation and the passing hour. Had Frank always retained his original subordinate situation,

the advantages which he might have derived from such a mode of education might probably have been less eminent. But the last six months had done wonders for him. Placed at the head of the foreign correspondence of the first manufacturing house in Britain, the success of its speculations had been in a great measure dependent upon his accuracy. He had thus been obliged to acquire, not only a knowledge, but an intimate one of those countries of Northern Europe, in which were the chief connections of the house of Willis and Staunton. He had thus been compelled to make himself master of their population, their produce, their wealth, their shipping, their harbours, their means of consuming British manufactures, and the amount of the friendly or hostile feeling towards England, which their proportionate interests in cultivating an alliance with it made probable.

These were valuable acquirements in any man who had a seat in the national legisla-

ture, and who was called upon nightly to discuss the affairs of a country so essentially maritime and commercial in its character as Great Britain. But they were doubly so in the early part of the nineteenth century. Partly because the landed gentry and the cadets of noble families, who then for the most part formed the House of Commons, were singularly ignorant of them, and partly because the few members of the mercantile class who had found their way into Parliament, and who alone were versant in the subjects connected with their profession, scarcely ever ventured to take part in debate, for the double reason, that from their supposed inferiority of birth they were ill-listened to, and that when they did speak, their unhappiness of language and manner marred, in the utterance or the delivery, valuable truths, which in the mouth of a better orator would have entranced and commanded the attention of their audience.

It is thus, that misfortunes which appear overwhelming at the time, often bring in their train the happiest fruits. And it was thus that Frank on the first night on which he took his seat in St. Stephen's, as he listened to a thousand quotations which Parr and Bentley could not have mended, and a thousand errors in the statistics and science of commerce which would have disgraced a shop-boy, felt that the two years spent in the office of James Staunton had supplied him with better materials for rebuilding his shattered fortunes, than all the glories and the knowledge which he had inherited as the representative of the far descended Delameres.

CHAPTER IX.

FRANK'S FIRST SPEECH.

"Though the Bard to purer fame may soar
When wild youth's past,
And win the wise who frowned before
To smile at last;
He'll never meet a joy so sweet
In all his noon of fame,
As when first he sang to woman's ear
His soul-felt flame;
And at every turn she blushed to hear
The one loved name."

MOORE.

THE period was highly favourable for the *début* of the new actor. It is an old adage that troublous times produce great men. And the proverb is easily understood. If there be a pleasure-party on the river, the

gaily freighted vessel, as long as the waters are smooth and the wind low, is for the most part steered by the giver of the festivity, who decked for the nonce in an oil-skin hat and unimpeachable blue jacket and white trousers, fancies himself every inch a sailor. But when the weather changes, the water roughens, and the stormy winds do blow, the gaily-draped Palinurus is obliged to resign the helm to one who, though in tarry jacket and trousers, becomes, as the tempest increases, the observed of all observers; whose looks are watched, whose wishes are complied with, and whose words are listened to as oracles.

The great communities of the earth in their sentiments and mode of acting resemble the more minute ones. So long as the political horizon is clear, the helm is left to any prince, peer, or bureaucrat who may chance or choose to take it. But when real danger threatens the State, the terror of what may be termed the national community be-

comes greater than their conventional reverence for their self-elected dignitaries; and the men who are called to the management of public affairs are those whose talents and energies are best suited to the emergency, without any reference to their possessing hereditary connection, wealth, or political influence. This is a natural, and it is a proper result in a country which professes to be guided by the will of the people. But in England, as in Athens and Rome, the existence of such a means of advancement, or in other words the fact that mere talent can bestow supreme power, necessarily fosters to a great extent the energy and ability which is to be so highly remunerated. And thousands who, under the general Camarilla system, would have remained listless or quiescent, make at once desperate struggles for eminence, the moment that public necessities offer it as the magnificent prize of him who deserves it.

In 1805, when Frank Delamere entered

Parliament, Europe was reeling to its very centre under the throes of the political earthquake, produced by the ambition of Napoleon. The state of public affairs had called Pitt to the helm, but except the mighty mind which ruled the Government, and which had transferred him when a boy from a briefless Circuit to the head of the Ministry, there was little in the Tory Cabinet to win admiration or respect. The great nobility and boroughmongers possessed overwhelming power. They had unwillingly conceded to the talent of the self-supported Minister a task to which they found themselves unequal, that of guiding the helm of State, but they nevertheless limited his powers, and cramped his movements, by insisting on partitioning amongst themselves and their satellites the subordinate offices of the Government.

This weakness in the camp was, of course, no secret to their Whig adversaries. An

opposition can always be more brilliant than a ministry. In the latter there is ever some necessity for concert amongst its members. In the former, on the contrary, are united all who, however various may be the shades of their political opinions, have for the moment at least one common object—the desire to destroy a power which is equally a barrier to their common aspirations. Thus, while the Treasury benches were poorly filled, those on the other side of the House were crowded with everything that was most distinguished for talent in England—the declamatory power of Fox—the wit of Sheridan—the satire of Tierney—the constitutional eloquence of Erskine.

It can easily be imagined how fascinating such a scene was to a young and ambitious mind like Frank Delamere's. He was not, however, carried away by his enthusiasm. Fortunate in his double education at Oxford and at Manchester, he was equally fortunate

in having advisers who were able to inform him as to the best mode of employing it usefully.

His grandfather's old friend, Sir John St. Paul, had spent half his life on the benches of St. Stephen's. He had never spoken, but shrewd, keen-sighted, and clear-headed, none was better able to appreciate the talents of others, or the causes of their failure or success. Frank had called upon him shortly after his arrival in London, and the aged legislator had taken a great liking for his friend's grandson. At his house, Frank met constantly the most distinguished men of both parties, and for his benefit, the wily man of the world opened his private thoughts, and gave him the results of his experience.

"You have a fine career before you, boy," said the political Mentor to his Telemachus, as one Saturday evening they were seated *tête-à-tête* over a bottle of claret, at the table of the former, at his bachelor residence in

Chesterfield Street. "You have a fine career before you."

"I can scarcely see, Sir John," said Frank, with a smile, "in what it consists. I am poor."

"That is precisely one of its most excellent qualities. But you are wrong in saying you are poor; you ought to say you are not rich."

"It matters little which."

"It matters much. If you were dependent on your own exertions, your efforts to obtain distinction in Parliament would be perpetually cramped by the necessity of providing for your existence. If on the contrary you were rich, you would descend now, as you have descended before, into a member of the four-in-hand club, and spend life in a vain attempt to rival the talents of your coachman. You are happily removed from either extreme. You have not wealth enough for folly; while at the same time, with your five

hundred a year, you are equally unfettered by those anxieties and baser cares, which clog or destroy the finest intellect."

"You consider then what I term my poverty," said Frank, with a laugh, "as a positive advantage ?"

"I do."

"And why ?"

"Because it impresses upon you a perpetual consciousness of your insignificance, and makes you feel every hour of the day, that the only mode of freeing yourself from it, is by an energetic, nay more, a systematic employment of your talents. In short, my dear Frank, you have come into Parliament, and you must make a profession of it. How many young fellows have I seen with great abilities, who have done nothing. How many brilliant first speeches have I listened to, which promised in the orator a future prime minister, and which have fallen on the political field barren and unproductive."

"And why ?"

"Simply because the speakers were not forced to work. The orators had position and influence independent of their oratory, and they naturally gave way to that strongest feeling of human nature, their indolence. No, my dear Frank, it is only labour which gives success, and it is only necessity which supplies labour; and you will succeed, because your five hundred pounds income, though it gives you bread and cheese, does not place you above that necessity."

"And what would you have me do."

"Wait your time. A man succeeds in Parliament as he does in the medical profession, or at the bar. Not by a general and inaccurate knowledge of every part of his profession, but by an intimate and accurate knowledge of one."

"I feel that you are right," said Frank, "and I must look out for some subject upon which I must illuminate the collective wisdom of St. Stephen's."

"It is found for you already, and certainly it is precisely the last which I should have guessed a double first at Oxford, would have known anything about."

"And what is that?"

"Trade."

Frank smiled.

"I don't know where the deuce you have picked up your ideas upon the matter, but so it is, that you appear to possess them. You know I have never permitted political differences to affect my private friendships, and you have met at my table not only Vansittart and the leading men on the Treasury bench, but Fox, Sheridan, Tierney, and the Dii Majorum Gentium of the other side. I don't know what you said to them, or they to you, but they all told me, not only that my old friend's grandson was a devilish fine young fellow—(my dear Frank, you should not blush, it is *mauvais ton* to blush now-a-days,) and that he had great powers of language and general information. But

they always added, 'But where the deuce, St. Paul, did he pick up all his ideas on trade? By Jove! he knows more of balances and national debits and credits than the whole of us put together.'"

"Very flattering, my dear Sir. And so you think—"

"That trade should be your *cheval de bataille*. You have already acquired a reputation upon the subject, and will be well listened to, the more especially that not one man in a hundred in the House knows anything about the matter."

"I feel that you are right, Sir John," said Fank. "Trade shall be my *cheval de bataille*. I am impatient to begin, and I shall speak upon the subject immediately."

"That won't do either, my dear boy. You young fellows are always so impatient. Information is *valuable* in this world, but when you have lived as long in it as I have, you will have learned that it is *valued* only when asked for, and not when it forces

itself down people's throats. You must, as I said before, wait your time. A little bird has whispered in my ear, that the opposition are about to bring forward a motion some six weeks hence, assailing the policy of the Government with regard to Northern Germany, and the mercantile interest. Prepare yourself on it, and let us see what you can do."

"It is a great question for a young man to break ground upon."

"So much the better. It is only by speaking upon great questions, and above all by speaking rarely, that a young man can obtain weight in the country. Your regular debaters, as they are called, who speak half a dozen times a night, half a dozen sentences, upon everything that is brought before the House, and keep yelping and snapping right and left like a Scotch terrier, may be devilish clever fellows, but they never make their way in the world, and in the end are voted a nuisance by every-

body. So prepare yourself on the North of Europe, and say not a word of it to any one, for nothing assists a brilliant start so much as its not being expected."

Frank took the advice of his grandfather's old friend. While in Mr. Staunton's office he had read largely upon the kingdoms bordering on the German Ocean and the Baltic, and had not only made ample notes and extracts upon the subjects of his studies, but had also committed to paper the more practical and less disseminated information communicated in the foreign correspondence of the firm of Willis and Staunton. All this was to a certain degree valuable, but its value was increased tenfold, in consequence of his power of applying it, from his personal acquaintance with the country. Of the twelve months spent abroad, eight had been devoted to that portion of the continent. The time had been industriously employed, and the knowledge of the *locale*, and of the cha-

racter, the habits, and the interests of the people acquired upon the spot, enabled Frank to bring to his book-lore, and the mass of matter which it presented, a discretion and power of choice and rejection of its more or less valuable items, which otherwise would have failed him. He now gave himself up night and day to throwing the heterogeneous information into shape, and selecting from it the most important facts suggested by his reading or his experience.

In the meantime, the prophecy of Sir John St. Paul was verified. A motion on the subject was placed on the minutes of the House of Commons, by one of the most distinguished members of the Opposition; and the day came at last which was to decide whether Frank Delamere was to be as successful in his new career, as he had been in that of clerk to Mr. Staunton the cotton-spinner.

The House was crowded. It was a great

night. The subject was one upon which was staked the fate of the Ministry. The minor business of the evening was gradually cleared away, and at six o'clock the combat began by the skirmishers upon either side —the hack debaters, who were tolerated because they filled up the earlier hours, and permitted the chiefs of the rival armies to finish their dinners at leisure, and refresh themselves for the critical moment of the struggle.

It was about eleven o'clock. One of the great speakers on the Opposition side had just taken his seat, when Frank and some half dozen others rose. Frank had many acquaintances in the House. He had renewed his alliance with his old Oxford friends, not a few of whom wrote M.P. to their names as well as himself; and at his relative's, the Duke of Acton's, he had been brought into contact with some of the most prominent members of the Tory party. But his chief advantage was derived from his

having shared in the dinner parties of Sir John St. Paul. The distinguished guests of the worthy Baronet had in many cases, as we have already related, been struck with Frank's acquaintance with commercial subjects, and had besides been prejudiced in his favour by the eulogiums of their host. The appearance of the new debutant, therefore, was welcomed by all parties. His old chums of Christ Church wished to give him a lift—the Treasury hacks were anxious to herald their respect for the relative of a great noble, who commanded seven seats, and was one of their most powerful supporters —and the distinguished leaders of the Opposition felt the natural honest English desire to allow the lad to show what was in him. It was therefore amid the general cry of "Mr. Delamere" that the other aspirants for fame relinquished the field, and Frank was left to address the House.

The new speaker was rather nervous at starting, and the first two or three sen-

tences were hardly articulate. But he gained courage as he proceeded, and before he had been on his legs five minutes, as he concluded the enunciation of some great principle of commercial policy, a cheer from both sides restored him to confidence and to power. Indeed, he had many of the qualifications necessary for a great orator. He had a fluency of language, which it will be remembered had won the unwilling admiration of Mary Staunton, in the moment of her first acquaintance and strongest prejudice. He had an intimate knowledge of the subject of discussion, a knowledge which furnished him alike with the theories of philosophy and the results of practice, and what perhaps was not his least qualification, he had a very handsome face and figure.

When Milton, in the magniloquent phraseology of blank verse, stated that Satan was very much affected by the speech of the Archangel, more especially as the Archangel possessed transcendant grace and beauty, he

only announced what is acknowledged to be a universal truth. The tragic actor borrows half his success from his physical form, and Lord Brougham has chronicled the effect produced upon the spectators of a greater theatre by Lord Castlereagh's magnificent person, his white waistcoat and blue ribbon.

Frank was thus well listened to. In the earlier part of the speech he confined himself strictly to the statistics of the debate, illustrating his argument by a thousand minute facts, which were for the first time developed to men, who had not had the advantage of an apprenticeship in a counting-house, or a residence in Germany. As he proceeded, however, his argument became more philosophic, and his language assumed a loftier character; till at length he concluded a speech of three-quarters of an hour's duration by an impassioned address to the feelings of his audience, conveyed in a burst of oratory which was the more admired,

because from the dry and didactic tone of the earlier part of his address, it had been in no degree anticipated.

The young speaker sat down amidst cheers from both sides of the House, followed by the personal congratulations of the occupants of the Treasury bench, amongst whom none distinguished himself so much by his zeal and enthusiasm in favour of the rising sun, as Mr. George Frederick Augustus Lacy.

The speech, he assured Frank, in a diplomatic whisper, had been most effective—in a still lower tone he added, that he was instructed by the Prime Minister himself to convey to Mr. Delamere his admiration for the knowledge and talent displayed by it, and that he would have much pleasure in cultivating the alliance of one who had proved himself so able a supporter.

If anything had been wanting to give authenticity to the honeyed blandishments of Mr. Lacy, it would have been found on

the other side of the House. One of the great leaders of the Opposition rose to reply. For a few minutes he contented himself with expressing, in the most eulogistic terms, the pleasure which he in common, he was confident, with every person present, had listened to the address of the young speaker; and then proceeded to pay to both the greatest possible compliment, by endeavouring to dispute his facts, and neutralise his deductions.

Frank had been most successful. But his happiness, great as it was, was destined to be increased. A note was brought to him by the black coated, white neck-clothed usher at the door. It was written in pencil, and stated, simply, that two friends were waiting for him in the lobby. He hurried out, and found himself in the presence of Sir John St. Paul and Captain Delamere.

"Let me congratulate you my young friend," said the Baronet. "The most successful first speech I ever heard."

"By Jove, Frank!" said Uncle John "you are a cleverer chap than I took you for. Put you where you will, you always fall upon your legs. If I had known what was in you, I should have had you out to India five years ago, and made you Vizier to Jung Jow. But come; there is some one waiting to see you in the lantern."

"And who is that?"

"Come and learn."

His two friends led the way, and Frank followed with hurried step. The trio mounted to the little repertory overhead. It was crowded with female figures, but at the door, as if expecting his arrival, were his mother and Lady Carpenter.

The excitement of the moment seemed to have transported both beyond the rules of conventionality, for both flung their arms consecutively round Frank's neck.

"My dear boy," said one.

"My dear Frank," said the other.

"Oh! what happiness to find you here," said Frank, "and how unexpected. How did you know I was to speak?"

"I had it from Sir John St. Paul," said Lady Carpenter, "and as I thought that your mother might wish to hear her son's first oration, I sent a letter to Laurel Cottage; and my old friend and Captain Delamere came up yesterday. But as we thought it might make you nervous, we said nothing on the subject. So don't tell me for the future, Frank," said the old lady gaily, "that women cannot keep a secret. And now you have received all our congratulations, but one. Do you know, Frank, there is still another lady here, who desires to add her compliments to ours. Can't you guess who it is?"

Frank looked eagerly round, but in the eight or ten high-born women, who were the occupants of the little chamber, and

of whose admiring glances he was the object, he could trace no familiar features. There was but one more lady present, and she had pertinaciously kept her face averted, since the moment of his entry. Lady Carpenter took her by the arm, and apparently with some difficulty, succeeded in inducing her to turn towards them. The fair recusant complied at length, and acknowledged the presence of the orator of the night. The curtsey was low, formal, and almost distant, but in the beautiful countenance, crimsoned though it was from temple to chin, Frank had no difficulty recognising the lineaments of Mary Staunton.

CHAPTER X.

MR. STUBBS' LETTER.

"1*st. Cit.* Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

2*nd. Cit.* If thou consider rightly of the matter Cæsar has had great wrong."

JULIUS CÆSAR.

We must now return to Staunton Lodge. It may be easily understood the astonishment with which the news of the expulsion of Frank from the counting-house was received by its inmates.

James Staunton had carefully concealed from his own family his intention of canvassing the Borough of Delamere. Partly because he was unwilling to risk the success of his election by prematurely publishing to

the world his ambitious intentions, and partly by what was a very extraordinary incident in the feelings of the manufacturer, by delicacy to Lady Carpenter. He was aware how much she was attached to Mrs. Delamere and her son, and knew well the pain that she would have in listening to discussions, which had for their object the future power over a body of freeholders, which had hitherto been considered the property of her friend's family. Besides, interest had something to do with his self-control. Lady Carpenter had been the intimate friend of his deceased wife; and Mrs. Staunton, on her death-bed, had strongly recommended to her husband, that he should endeavour, if possible, to secure for Mary the benefit of her care. And James Staunton had anxiously followed out the suggestion.

Lady Carpenter had not only a warm affection for his child, but she had a high character and strong sound sense, and besides

this she had a quality which the prudent manufacturer scarcely less valued; she had no near connexions, and thus there was small risk of the young heiress being exposed in her house to the continued presence or attentions of some needy relative. In the ethics of James Staunton there was no principle more distinct than horror of having a pauper son-in-law.

Under these circumstances, it had ever been his policy to gratify the old lady's feelings by every attention which he deemed calculated to soothe them; and acting upon this principle he had, with full recollection of his fair guest's connection with Mrs. Delamere, carefully avoided any allusion to the loss of their estate, or the impending election for the Borough of Delamere.

From a similar cause, compounded partly of kindness and partly of interest, he had not spoken of his intentions to Frank Delamere, or in the counting-house. The public press, no doubt, had communicated the idea

alike at the residence at Staunton Lodge, and to the gentlemen at the desk in Manchester; but neither his own family nor his *employés* had thought fit to introduce to his notice a subject which he himself, by his silence, had intimated a disinclination to allude to.

The treachery of Frank, however, as he conceived it to be, was a matter too gross to be passed over without comment; and on the eventful day on which the heir of the Delameres had been expelled from his service, on his going up to the drawing-room after dinner, he announced the fact without circumlocution to Lady Carpenter and his daughter.

It may be easily understood with what astonishment the intelligence was received. It was not, however, received in silence. The old lady took up her godson's cause warmly.

"I cannot credit it, Mr. Staunton," said she. "There is some mystery which has

yet to be explained. What it is I know not; but this I do know, that I have been acquainted with Frank from his childhood, and that a more honourable lad never existed. He never could have been guilty of the treachery you charge him with, and ere long I am confident that you will discover that you have wronged him."

As for poor Mary, she said nothing. Her eyes indeed expressed to Lady Carpenter her gratitude for defending her absent friend; but she was conscious of too many recollections to trust herself with words, so she once more took to the camphor julep.

In the meantime the election proceeded. Of its ultimate result James Staunton never doubted. He knew the power of gold, and had instructed his agent to lavish it. He knew too the poverty of his antagonist, and felt, while he reflected upon it, increased confidence in a successful future.

From this blissful dream he was awake

by the letters of Mr. Stubbs, acquainting him with the liberal expenditure of his opponent. James Staunton felt astonished, angry, anxious. He began for the first time to admit to himself a doubt of the possibility of his success. His prognostications of evil proved but too true. A letter from his agent at length announced to him that the struggle had terminated in favour of his adversary, and it was followed, some few days after, by a bill, the amount of which astonished even the wealthy manufacturer, and proved that in one point at least the attorney had complied with his orders in sparing no expense.

The announcement of the loss of his seat was incomprehensible enough. That which followed was still more so. About a week after the termination of the struggle, the following missive from Mr. Stubbs was placed upon the breakfast-table of Staunton Lodge.

"Delamere.

"Sir,

"I have already had the honour of acquainting you in my former letters with the immense expenditure incurred by the Blue party in effecting the return of Mr. Francis Delamere; and I have mentioned that I have attempted in vain to discover the source from which the funds employed for that object were so extravagantly supplied. I have now to state to you a fact still more mysterious, and that is, that Mr. Delamere himself is as ignorant upon that subject as I am. Nay more, that that gentleman was put up for the borough without his knowledge or consent. I have further to add that, on his becoming acquainted with his nomination, he expressed a wish to withdraw from the contest, but that he was not listened to by his party, who eventually elected him in spite of his own wishes. It may be in your recollection that Mr. Thomas Smith, attorney-at-law, was employed as

agent for the Blue party. I am constantly in my professional career brought into collision with that gentleman, but I am bound to say that he is in the highest degree an honourable and trustworthy man. Mr. Smith showed me a letter in the handwriting of Mr. Delamere, announcing his astonishment at his nomination—his inability from pecuniary embarrassments to continue the contest—and his unwillingness under any circumstance to go into Parliament. I have to add, that Mr. Smith stated upon his word of honour that, in spite of that letter, and without his knowledge, Mr. Delamere was elected. He added, moreover, what I have already had the honour of mentioning to you, that though there were some individuals in the background who had amply supplied funds for the contest, and with whose names he declined to furnish me, that Mr. Delamere was as ignorant of the locality or designation of his unknown friends as myself. The matter is in the highest degree

mysterious; but I may be allowed to repeat, that from what I know of Mr. Smith's character, that in his statements to me, extraordinary as they are, he has spoken the simple truth.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"FREDERICK STUBBS."

"Read that, Mary," said the old gentleman, "and read it aloud. I thought I had a pretty clear head for most matters, but I confess that this is to me utterly unintelligible."

Mary read the letter.

"Now, Mr. Staunton," said Lady Carpenter in a triumphant tone, "did I not tell you so? I knew the boy was too honourable to descend to treachery."

"But why did he not acquaint me with all this?" said the manufacturer, with something like consciousness of having done injustice.

"Did you give him the opportunity?"

There was no answer.

"When you expelled him from your office, did you tell him the reason why?"

"No," said Mr. Staunton, as he coloured up to the tips of his well-powdered ears. "I took it for granted that he must have known the reason of my anger, and in my passion I told him simply to be gone."

"Well, you see, my dear Sir, that you only were to blame."

"But he might have written to me on the subject."

"You could not expect it. Frank has proper pride, and he was not called upon to defend himself against—you will forgive me for saying so—gross injustice."

"And you, Mary," said the old gentleman, turning for refuge to his daughter from the animadversions of his kind-hearted but irritable guest; "what do you say to all this?"

"Oh papa, dear papa," said Miss Staun-

ton, "I scarce know what to say. I feel that Lady Carpenter is right, and that Mr. Delamere could not have acted otherwise. Dear papa, indeed, indeed, you have behaved harshly."

It was evident Mr. Staunton was likely to receive but small assistance from his own family, and the crest-fallen manufacturer sat discomfited and silent.

"And now, my dear Sir," said Lady Carpenter, after a while, "the matter cannot rest here; you must be conscious that you have condemned the poor lad without a cause, and your good sense will suggest to you the propriety of a reparation."

"Reparation!" said Mr. Staunton, in astonishment; "what would you have?"

"I would have you do two things," said his persevering guest. "You have injured Frank with his fellows. I would have you state in the office that you have condemned him unjustly. You must have lacerated deeply his own feelings. I would have you

empower me, to say or write to Frank Delamere that you are sorry for the injustice."

The manufacturer hesitated.

"Oh, father! dearest father," said Mary, "you are too honest and kind-hearted to give pain when it has been undeserved. You have been in error with regard to Mr. Delamere, why should you not confess the error? Do what Lady Carpenter asks, and I will love you." And his daughter put her arms around her father's neck, and kissed him affectionately on the cheek.

"Ah!" said the old man, as he gazed with pride on the beautiful creature beside him, "this is the way you women always get the better of us; there will be no end of coaxing and kissing till you have got your own way. If it must be so, it must. So, Lady Carpenter, you may write to the lad what you will; and as to the fellows in the office, I will tell them I was wrong. And I am the less sorry for it, as that chap that has stepped into Frank's shoes, is

not fit to hold a candle to him. That foreign correspondence used to be such easy work. It is now the plague of my life."

Accordingly Lady Carpenter wrote her letter but addressed it not to Frank, but to Mrs. Delamere, and shortly after the two ladies departed for London.

It has been already mentioned that Mr. Staunton had purchased a house in Grosvenor Square. During Mrs. Staunton's lifetime—though the old gentleman himself for the most part remained at the Lodge, the better to superintend the affairs of the firm—his wife and daughter had been in the habit of spending the season in town. And the same system still continued since her death. Lady Carpenter had succeeded to the cares and the honours of her deceased friend, and now as the spring advanced, accompanied Mary to the capital. For gaiety—in its usual acceptation—neither lady had much relish. Their dinner and evening society was consequently moderate. Not

from want of temptation to be otherwise, for Mary's large fortune was well known, and there were of course many who were anxious to obtain a legal title to it, accompanied, as it would be, by the possession of a being so beautiful. But the taste of neither led them to indulge in what are termed the pleasures of the season. Their establishment and equipages were no doubt of the handsomest; and Mary's riding horse the gem of the park. In other respects there was no extravagance, unless the term were applied to an opera box in the first tier, the natural accompaniment to the musical taste of the young heiress. They lived, therefore, what might be called a quiet life.

Of morning visitors, however, they saw plenty. But Frank Delamere was not of the number. His mother had enclosed to him Lady Carpenter's letter, announcing the change in the opinion of Mr. Staunton, but he still felt too bitterly with regard to the

past; and notwithstanding an occasional missive from his godmother, expressing a wish to see him, he did not call. From time to time no doubt he met the ladies at parties, but, except the civilities of a passing bow, seemed to avoid their presence, and though he had carefully expended Uncle John's three fifties upon the purchase of a Bucephalus, handsome enough to have carried Philip's great son, and in his rides occasionally met Miss Staunton in the Park, he exhibited no wish to join her party, or attach himself to her side. His absence in the first instance, was deemed accidental. In the second, it became too obvious to be doubtful or unremarked. The old lady was first vexed, then angry, and then anxious, and expressed herself in bitter terms at his indifference and ingratitude to his godmother. Mary said nothing, but her cheek became paler and paler. On their first arrival in London, she had eagerly welcomed the idea of attending the Opera, or taking the air in

Rotten Row. She now as eagerly sought excuses for avoiding both. Her very rides were given up. She remained moodily at home, and lost her health and spirits. Lady Carpenter became alarmed.

"Heaven preserve us!" said the old woman to herself. "What is to be done now? When that poor boy asked her, at the Hermitage, for I am sure he asked her, she refused him; and now that he carefully avoids her, as far as I can judge, she is in a fair way to be desperately in love with him. This doubt and anxiety will kill her. The matter must go on, or go off. I must either contrive their meeting and bring the the thing to an *éclaircissement*, or break it off altogether."

The project was judicious. The only difficulty was how to carry it into effect, for poor Lady Carpenter was no manœuvrer, and the matter was too delicate to make it possible for her to admit another into her confidence.

Fortunately, however, chance effected what her best schemes had been unable to accomplish. Sir John St. Paul was a friend of old Mr Delamere's. At Delamere Court he had made the acquaintance of Lady Carpenter, and now renewed the intimacy in Grosvenor Square. Aware that the worthy dame was Frank's godmother, he had informed her in confidence, of the intention of his young friend to speak in the approaching debate. Lady Carpenter at once saw the opportunity she had been looking for, and formed her plans. She said nothing on the subject to Mary, but she determined that the young heiress should be present at her godson's oratory.

"If I cannot," said she to herself, "get them to come to some understanding with each other then I must give it up altogether, and withdraw the girl from London. I am sure the boy loves her, but from pride on one side, and pride on the other, unless the two young folks are forced into com-

munication, we shall have both spending their lives in misery, which the interchange of a few words would spare them."

Full, therefore, for the first time of a great project, the worthy dame intimated to her young hostess her curiosity to hear a debate in the House of Commons, and asked Mary to accompany her. It was a point upon which, as upon all others, Miss Staunton had become indifferent; but as she saw that her aged friend's heart was set upon the matter, she assented, the more especially as she understood that gentlemen were not admitted to the Lantern, and that there was no chance of seeing Frank.

In the meantime Lady Carpenter had made her preparations. She had, with the consent of Sir John St. Paul, given notice to Mrs. Delamere and Uncle John of Frank's intended *début*, and through the agency of the Baronet had obtained three orders for the Lantern. As she had expected, Frank's mother and uncle intimated their intention

of coming up to town upon an occasion so interesting to both, and they arrived accordingly on the day preceding the debate. Of all this, however, Lady Carpenter said nothing to Mary Staunton. To prevent even the possibility of any information being communicated to her young charge of what was likely to take place, the worthy dowager had refrained from visiting Mrs. Delamere after her arrival. She had forwarded to Laurel Cottage the order obtained for her admission, and thither on the important evening Frank's mother had been escorted by Uncle John, and thither too, under the charge of Sir John St. Paul, went Lady Carpenter and her young friend.

It would be difficult to say what Mary's feelings were when, on entering the little chamber, she became first conscious of the presence of Mrs. Delamere. Her cheek flushed and paled by turns, but she gradually recovered her self-possession, a matter the more easy as the two elder dames were

seemingly too much wrapped up in each other to be conscious of her presence. Insensibly the young heiress felt the attractions of the debate, and gave herself up heart and soul to the excitement of a scene so well calculated to gratify her tastes, and rivet the attention of one so intelligent.

It was only when Frank rose to speak that an undefined terror first came over her, a sort of feeling, in short, that her presence there was not accidental, but that she had been brought for the express purpose of witnessing the *début* of her old companion. But even this feeling was not long-lived. Like the audience beneath, she gradually abandoned herself to the fascination of the speaker's manner, to the beauty of his language, the freshness of his ideas, and the novelty yet truth of his deductions. Mary lost not a word, she listened with breathless attention; and when at the close of the burst of eloquence which terminated the address the cheering rose loud and long

upon her ear, the agitated girl was obliged to lean upon the side of the chamber for support.

With the events which followed our readers are already acquainted. We have but one fact to add. The manœuvre of Lady Carpenter had succeeded, and the whole party, late as the hour was, adjourned to Grosvenor Square, to tea. Miss Staunton's melancholy appeared to have vanished: she had become not only cheerful but gay. As to the cause of so sudden a change it would be idle to speculate. All that we have ascertained for certain is, that as soon as Uncle John and Mr. Delamere had departed, Mary threw her arms round Lady Carpenter's neck, and having three several times kissed most affectionately her aged friend, moved off to her chamber, with a smile on her lip and a sparkle in her eye, such as had not visited either since the day of Frank's last appearance at Staunton Lodge.

As for the young orator of the night, he had long since hurried back to the House of

Commons, for the purpose of being present at the division. He had spent scarce a quarter of an hour in Grosvenor Square, but he had contrived to devote ten minutes of it to assisting Mary in arranging some music-books in the back drawing-room. He too was in high spirits. Could he have found a private audience as favourable as a public one? Could he have made a second time a successful speech?

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE IN THE BLUSH.

"Then there were sighs the deeper for suppression,
And stolen glances sweeter for the theft;
And burning blushes though for no transgression,
Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left."

BYRON.

And what was said by Frank on the eventful night on which he had made his oration, and when after accompanying Lady Carpenter to Grosvenor Square, he had spent ten minutes with Mary in the back drawing-room. Nearly nothing, and yet everything. The words interchanged between the parties, to any other ear but their own would have appeared the common courtesies of common acquaintance. But it is wonderful how deli-

cate are the sensibilities of a "conscious couple," how to airy nothings they give a grave import, and how they contrive, like the elixir of the alchymist, to transmute the baser metal of every-day compliment into gold.

As soon as the party had entered the drawing-room, its graver members, the two elderly dames and Uncle John, for the first time free from the surveillance of strangers, congratulated Frank upon his eloquence, and added many gratifying anticipations of his future career. Frank listened, but apparently without interest. His eyes wandered round the room, seemingly in search of praises from other lips. If he expected them he was doomed to be disappointed, for the young heiress of the cotton-spinner, instead of assisting in the eulogiums so liberally bestowed, had, after freeing herself from her bonnet, proceeded to the back drawing-room. It was certainly very extraordinary for Mary to have exhibited so

much apathy with regard to the success of her old companion, but it may be recollected that Mary was intensely musical; at least it is only in such a fashion that we are able to account for her selecting such a moment for sitting down to the piano.

Yet it would have been difficult to have discovered what air she played. You might have sought for it a year and in vain on the shelves of the Musical Repository. Indeed, we doubt if Mary herself could have given it a name. One hand, no doubt, was on the keys, and her fingers at intervals struck a note, but it scarce seemed to awaken consciousness in the performer, for she leant against the back of her chair, her eyes fixed on the ceiling, and with the glance of one whose thoughts were wandering. If the music, however, struck not her own ear, it fell clear and distinct on that of another. As soon as the low sounds had found their way to the front drawing-room, Frank began

to show extraordinary symptoms of impatience, even at praises which at another time, and from kindred lips, would have appeared to him so gratifying. At length, forgetful alike of the politeness due to Lady Carpenter and his relatives, he moved off towards the piano, leaving the worthy widow of the Indian judge to conclude as she pleased, and to whom she pleased, her commendations of her godson's oratory. The two dowagers looked after his receding movements in astonishment. Their eyes then met, but they said nothing. As for Captain Delamere, he too had marvelled at the disappearance of his nephew, but as soon as he caught the occasional notes awakened by Mary's fingers, he gave a cough, thrust his hands into his breeches-pockets, and commenced pacing rapidly up and down the apartment, humming as he went the old air of "Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad." Fortunately for the harmony of the evening, his musical performances were unremarked. If Mary

had heard them she never would have forgiven Uncle John.

In the meantime, Frank had advanced to the piano. Mary apparently had not been aware of his approach. At least, she intimated her consciousness of it by an exclamation of "Mr. Delamere, how you startled me," uttered in a voice so natural as to have satisfied any but the most hardened unbeliever, that she had not the most distant recollection of his existence.

"And why should I startle you?" said Frank. "It is not often that one has the pleasure of listening to such a performer as Miss Staunton. Why should she be surprised, then, that I should wish to assist at her piano?"

"It is but lately, Mr. Delamere," said Mary, with a laugh, "that you have discovered your taste for music, for I recollect the time when Miss Staunton's piano was anything but an object of attraction."

"It is ungenerous in you to say so."

"It is not the less true," said Mary, with a gay shake of the head. "I have not forgotten Staunton Lodge."

"Nor have I," whispered Frank.

Mary became nervous. We, for one, cannot tell why, for the remark appears to us the simplest possible. Miss Staunton's instinct however, seemed to have discovered some thorn beneath the rose-leaf, for she immediately added, in a tone of affected gaiety:

"You do not understand me, Mr. Delamere. Do you recollect Lady Margaret Seton?"

"Well."

"I knew you would never forget her," said the young lady, with something like pique in her voice. "But do you remember that special evening, in which you were discussing with her foreign scenery and foreign manners?"

"I often spoke to Lady Margaret of both."

"Yes; but there was one eventful night (my mortified vanity has fixed it in my memory) in which during your *tête-à-tête*, I had performed the very best of my sonatas."

"Well."

"It was not well, Mr. Delamere. On the contrary, it was in the highest degree mortifying. When I approached Lady Margaret and yourself, prepared to receive with becoming modesty the commendations which I doubted not you were ready to bestow, I found—"

"What?"

"That neither of you had heard a single note. To talk to me after that of your admiration of my music, Mr. Delamere! I positively wonder at your presumption."

Frank laughed, and laid the blame on the daughter of Lord Torrisdale.

"I won't listen to such an excuse, Mr. Delamere. I see, as Lady Mary Wortley says, that Father Adam is but the type of

his whole sex. You men first share greedily any forbidden fruit which a poor Eve may offer you, and then accuse her as the cause of your folly."

Frank put both his hands before his face, and did his best to look the emblem of modest embarrassment.

"No, no, Mr. Delamere, you do not escape me so easily; that is not the only instance on which you have exhibited your indifference to my sweet sounds. You must recollect upon the very first occasion on which I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Francis Delamere at the Hermitage, Lady Carpenter did her best to trumpet forth my poor excellences as a pianist and a Catalani."

"Well."

"Again, Sir, it was not well. She said as distinctly as lady could say to gentleman, 'Mr. Delamere, ask Miss Staunton to play and sing.' And what did Mr. Delamere?"

"Upon my word," said Frank, laughing, "I am frightened to ask."

"I am glad to hear you say so. It is the only symptom of proper contrition I have discovered in you. But as you seem to have forgotten it, I may be permitted to refresh your memory. Mr. Delamere did nothing of the sort. On the contrary, he sat most philosophically speaking to an old lady, when there was a young one by, ready, if she had been asked, to have made herself excessively delightful."

"It was, no doubt," said Frank, "a dreadful error, yet it has brought to me one consolation."

"And that is?"

"The hope," said Frank, and his voice sank to a whisper, "that the offender could not have been altogether an object of indifference to Miss Staunton, or she would not have taken so much trouble to register his offences."

Mary became deadly pale.

"May I be permitted," said Frank, "to treasure that hope?" and the tones of his

voice became so low, that they could be heard by no ears but those of his companion.

There was silence for an instant. Mary seemed agitated, but she recovered herself.

"Come," said she, in a tone of affected gaiety, "I am astonished at my want of politeness. Here have you blazed forth in the world a second Demosthenes, and I have not yet congratulated you on your success. I do congratulate you, and I must now go tell Mrs. Delamere how much I admired your speech."

She rose as she spoke, and moved towards the folding doors. She was intercepted by Frank.

"Ah, Miss Staunton!—" said he.

Mary interrupted him, as if anxious to prevent the utterance of the idea which was on his lips.

"No, no, Mr. Delamere. I will not allow you to disclaim its merit. The speech was an admirable one. But you will be too late

for the division. Should you not return to the House?"

Frank looked at her for a minute, and coloured deeply.

"If Miss Staunton is weary of me," said he, "I will no longer intrude," and he moved as if in anger towards the door.

It was now Mary's turn to be agitated.

"Mr. Delamere," said she, in a low voice.

Frank turned round sharply and bowed, but said nothing.

Mary seemed more confused than ever. "Mr. Delamere," said she at length, "all your friends take an interest in your success. Will you not, from time to time, let them hear of your progress? Lady Carpenter will be happy to see you in Grosvenor Square."

"And Miss Staunton?" said her companion in a cold tone of interrogation.

The happiness of the lives of both was in the balance; and if Mary's nerves had failed her, all would have been lost. She did not, however, forfeit her self-possession,

though the alternate flushing and paleness of her cheek bore evidence to the effort.

"And Miss Staunton also," said she. "And now, Mr. Delamere, good night."

She held out her hand as she spoke. Their eyes met. Frank clasped eagerly the extended fingers. In another minute he had seized his hat, and with beating heart, and hopes whispering of future happiness, was on his way to the House of Commons.

The senior guests remained to supper. In their turn they also departed, and two days after took their way back to Laurel Cottage.

As for Frank, he was now a frequent visitant at Grosvenor Square. His attentions to age had become extraordinary. For it was only of Lady Carpenter's presence in the mansion that he asked of the footmen at the door, and it was only to Lady Carpenter that were addressed the daily missives which were the result of his new-born veneration for his godmother.

But Frank did not the less devote himself to his political career. In fact, he probably felt conscious that the best chance of assuring the success of his affections was in acquiring a distinguished name, and he laboured assiduously to deserve it. For this end, the better part of his mornings were devoted to study, and his evenings to unremitting attendance in the House. Two months had elapsed since the eventful night which had first introduced him to the world as a candidate for political fame. During that period he had only spoken thrice, for he had rigidly followed out the counsels given him by Sir John St. Paul. But his appearances had been in the highest degree successful. He had already become in the political world a man of mark. The newspapers were filled with his name, and the abuse of the opposition journals bore as ample a testimony to his talents and his weight as the praises of the ministerialist.

All this was in the highest degree gratify-

ing, but the eloquence of the young speaker was attended with results even more important. Frank was offered an appointment under the Government. He was to have the management of the Colonies, but with Mr. Lacy for his nominal chief. The special office had, in fact, been suggested to Pitt by Mr. Lacy himself, on his ascertaining the favourable disposition of the Minister. The avowed reason for the counsel was, that from their relationship Frank and he would work well together. The real one was different. The red-tape man had of late formed a high opinion of his cousin's abilities, and had calculated that it would be convenient to have his department managed by a subordinate of whose talents and success he, the greater official, could claim the credit and appropriate the rewards. But Frank had learned caution from adversity; he suspected the snare, and respectfully but firmly declined the treacherous honours.

In all this it may be easily supposed that

Mary Staunton took an intense interest. In the presence of her lover, that interest was naturally veiled by maiden modesty. In his absence it was allowed to have full scope. Mary had become a desperate politician. According to her orders, every newspaper of eminence in the metropolis was sent to Grosvenor Square, and through the long pages the young heiress waded devotedly. The articles on Mr. Delamere, eulogistic, or the contrary, were carefully hunted out and read aloud for the benefit of Lady Carpenter. The worthy dowager, to be sure, by her occasional remarks, bore evidence that she understood little either of their argument or their object. But Mary, perseveringly, read on.

"It must be so interesting," she repeated to herself, "for Lady Carpenter to receive information of the success of her godson."

Sometimes, too, she was able to discuss their contents with a more intelligent auditor. She and Frank not unfrequently met in their

rides in the park. Ah! these were happy hours. And how rare they are. How seldom is it that a man finds a woman who, as a friend or a wife, can rise with him above petty vanities, petty ambitions, or petty interests.

To the heiress of Staunton Lodge would Frank detail from day to day the minute incidents of that great struggle in the political world which were unknown to any but the actors, the intrigues consequent upon the failing health of Pitt, the attempted combinations, the probable future, his hopes, his fears, his expectations; and Mary would listen with flushed cheek and sparkling eye to subjects that so well suited her own high intellect. And thus, without words being spoken, love progressed rapidly, and the two young beings, though they uttered not those vows of affection which are so often breathed but to be broken, became bound to each other by the strongest and the most lasting ties which can connect the changeful children

of humanity,—those of mutual confidence and mental respect.

And what all this time were the sayings and doings of our good friend Lady Carpenter? To confess the truth, the good dame began to get a little puzzled. She was an honest old soul, but not over-brilliant, and could never contrive to have more than one idea in her head at a time. When Mary, on her first arrival in London, had become pale, and fretful, and ill, Lady Carpenter had sought for the cause of a change so extraordinary in the usually good-tempered and warm-hearted girl. For once in her life the old lady had been fortunate enough to be right in her conjectures, and had attributed it, and correctly, to the absence and indifference of Mr. Francis Delamere. Eager in her singleness of purpose to restore the bloom to the cheeks of her young charge, she had devised the mighty project of bringing the young couple together in the Lantern of the House of Commons.

And the project had succeeded. The roses had returned to the fair cheek of Miss Staunton. The young lady had never looked in better health—her eyes sparkled with gaiety —her lips were decked in a perpetual smile. The very affections of her nature seemed to have become wonderfully developed, for she kissed Lady Carpenter twenty times a-day. All this was very delightful, and for a month the worthy dame passed her time in a state of positive beatitude.

The happiness was too great to last. In fact, felicity exhibits itself so rarely in this world, that its possession in those who have it, is a perpetual subject of jealousy to those who have it not; and certain female friends of the old dame, in their religious anxiety to prevent her forgetfulness of the adage that everything is vanity and vexation of spirit, determined to recal her to that orthodox state of mortification which is understood to be so necessary to humanity.

"My dear Lady Carpenter," said one of

those petticoated pests of society who spend their life in morning calls for the double purpose of soliciting subscriptions for missionary societies and speaking ill of their neighbours, "my dear Lady Carpenter, I constantly see Mr. Delamere riding with Miss Staunton."

"Yes," said the old lady, "I believe they are a good deal together. Old friends you know."

"Very dangerous things, those old friendships, Lady Carpenter."

"Dangerous!" said the worthy dame, who took everything *au pied de la lettre.* "I don't see why they should be dangerous. To me there is nothing so pleasant as to see young folks like each other."

"Very true, provided the matter don't go farther than liking."

"And if it did," said the simple-minded old lady, "where would be the harm? My godson, Frank Delamere, is as fine a young man as any in London."

"No doubt of it; but you know, my dear Lady Carpenter, that fine young men, when they have nothing in their pockets, are not precisely the persons to whom one would wish to marry ones daughters. I doubt much if the rich Mr. Staunton, would like to see his heiress throw herself away on a lad without a shilling."

And the fashionable Ate, having conscientiously disseminated her venom, walked off with the amiable feeling of one who has done a charitable action; and proceeded to labour elsewhere in the cause of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

Here was a pretty state of things for the contemplation of Lady Carpenter.

"If that ill-natured Mrs. Luscombe should be speaking truth," said the worthy dame to herself, "I fear I have been doing mischief only, where I have been trying to do good. I must think over the matter."

And Lady Carpenter did her best to

think over the matter. But reflection aided her little. She had not been accustomed to it. It always either gave her a headache, or like one of her poor deceased husband's favourite authors, set her to sleep. At the end of the week the good dame's meditations had not advanced a foot.

"I can make nothing of it," said she to herself, "I must write to Mr. Staunton."

Accordingly, on that very day, a letter was addressed to the proprietor of Staunton Lodge. Its results were important; but we must defer the letter and its consequences to a new chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

"Hame the gude man cam at een,
And hame cam he,
And there he fand a man,
Where a man shuld na be;
And what's this man adoing here
Without the thocht o' me?"

SCOTCH BALLAD.

The letter of Lady Carpenter was in the following words:

"Grosvenor Square.

"My dear Sir,

"I write to you with something like embarrassment. You are aware that young Mr. Delamere is now in London. He is my godson, and has naturally called fre-

quently on me in Grosvenor Square. He and Mary have thus seen much of each other, and it has been suggested to me within the last few days, that they may have formed a mutual attachment. I am not aware if any such exist, still less if there be any engagement between the parties; but I have thought it best to make you acquainted with circumstances as far as I know them myself, so as to enable you to use your own discretion. Frank Delamere is spoken of very highly. He has made some excellent speeches, and folks even whisper that he has been offered a place in the ministry.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"HELEN CARPENTER."

The good old dame, having thus done her best to aid the cause of her godson dispatched her letter. She had anticipated an immediate reply. No answer, however,

was received to it. Mr. Staunton might have been absent. He might have been ill. Whatever was the cause, he wrote nothing.

Of this correspondence, Mary and Frank were entirely ignorant. Lady Carpenter had given to neither a hint of the ill-natured speculations of Mrs. Luscombe, or of the letter which had been written in consequence.

"It may be," said the kind-hearted widow to herself, "that Mr. Staunton may approve of Frank as a son-in-law. In such case, it would only be condemning their young hearts to the misery of suspense by telling them what I have done. If the marriage does take place, they will be the happier never to have doubted it. If it does not take place, the sorrow will come soon enough."

The young couple, therefore, unconscious of the impending storm, went on as usual riding together, talking together, and speak-

ing confidentially upon every topic except the one that was most present to the thoughts of both. For strange to say, though neither doubted the affection of the other, yet they never spoke of love.

Of course such a subject must have been introduced by the gentleman, and Frank had never been able to summon up courage to make the confession. He had not forgotten the day on which he had left the Hermitage, and the haughty, almost contemptuous manner in which Mary had rejected his suit. It was true that she had given reasons for that rejection which no longer existed—the neglect of the talents which Heaven had bestowed upon him. If that had been a fault, it was a fault no longer. He could turn with pride to the laborious days and nights which he had spent in her father's counting-house, and to his present, if not more useful, at least more brilliant career. All these were matters which ought to have produced confidence, and yet they failed to do so, for Frank felt

that, since the time of their eventful parting in the park of the Hermitage, if he had gained, he had also lost. He was no longer the proprietor of Delamere Court, nor could he now as then welcome his bride to the hall of his fathers.

Such were some of the thoughts that flitted daily and hourly through his brain, and thus hope and fear, confidence and doubt, alternately urged him to ascertain his fate, or induced him to postpone to a future and happier moment, the question upon which so much depended.

It was upon the fifth day after Lady Carpenter had transmitted her letter to Staunton Lodge that Frank received a note from Mary. She had frequently before held the pen for Lady Carpenter: on the present occasion the letter was in her own name. She requested to see Frank immediately in Grosvenor Square, and stated that their aged friend had become extremely unwell. Frank hurried off instantly on receiving the sum-

mons, and found the intimation to be too true.

Lady Carpenter was ill. In fact anxiety acting upon the mind of the kind-hearted old woman, increased as it was by the silence of Mr. Staunton, had produced a species of nervous fever. The first medical man in London, Sir Henry Harcourt was sent for, and the invalid ordered to bed.

It was about eight o'clock, and Frank lingered in the drawing-room for the purpose of having the latest bulletin of the courtly Esculapius. He descended at last, accompanied by Mary, and having assured the young couple that there was no danger to be apprehended from their friend's illness, took his departure, and the two lovers were left alone.

Poor Mary was agitated. The illness of Lady Carpenter, or it may be some presentiment of evil, had affected her usually strong nerves, and she sat down on the sofa and wept; Frank placed himself beside her, and

took her hand. Sorrow softens the heart, and the fair fingers were abandoned to him unresistingly.

"You need not weep, Miss Staunton," said he, "Lady Carpenter will recover. Sir Henry tells us we have nothing to apprehend."

"Ah, Mr. Delamere! it is easy to recommend philosophy, but it is difficult to enforce its practice. You know not how I love her."

"And do not I? Has she not been to me a second mother? Have I not spent in her house the happiest days of my life? Was it not there that I first met you?"

Mary said nothing. There was a slight attempt to withdraw her hand. It was unsuccessful.

"Ah, Miss Staunton!" continued Frank, answering rather to the intended absence of the fair fingers than to anything that had been uttered, "would you be cruel enough to deny to me even the pleasure of recollection? Those days we passed

at the Hermitage were, I repeat, the happiest of my life—all save one," continued he, in a low whispered tone, "and even that one, wretched and miserable as it was, is one for which I feel most grateful."

Once more the little hand made an effort to escape. It was, as before, in vain.

"No," said Frank, "I hope nothing, I dare not hope—and yet, continued he, speaking rapidly, "if a man can redeem his first errors, I have endeavoured to redeem mine. You told me that I had no settled purpose, that my pursuits were frivolous, my ambition low—that you could not respect —that you could not love any man who did not place before his eyes some great object and labour perseveringly and unceasingly for its attainment. And have I not done so? Did I not in your father's office, and in a profession which I detested, work daily and nightly, without relaxation, and yet without complaint, to make myself master of it?

And when I was obliged to abandon it, and without fault of my own—for I swear to you, when your father bade me leave his house in anger, I knew nothing of my nomination for Delamere—have I not in my new career struggled on perseveringly for success? Nay, more, have I not gained it? Does not my name already stand high with the ministry and the country? And for what have I done this—why have I toiled on through good report and bad report, and all the difficulties of poverty, exhaustion, and a mind ill at ease—for what I say—but that I might win your smile, Mary?"

Again the fair hand made a faint effort to withdraw.

"No, Mary, you would not be so cruel, you could not be so unjust. You told me that you refused me, because I was a frivolous being and a creature of the hour; and now, when, in the hope of obtaining your affections, I have thrown aside the follies you reprobated and made myself a

name, would you still deny me this fair hand? No, no! I repeat you could not be so unjust."

And Frank passed his arm gently round her waist.

"Ah, Mr. Delamere!" said Mary, with the tears streaming from her eyes, "it is ungenerous to press me at such a moment for an answer. What would my father say, if his only child, and one to whom he has never uttered a harsh word, should without his knowledge or his sanction pledge herself to another?"

"Mary, I have no reason to love your father. He condemned me unjustly and unheard; but he is still your father, and I will ever speak of him with respect. I ask you then, what right has he, should you consent to become my wife, to oppose our union? My rank in life—my connections—my character—my future prospects, are all such that he cannot find fault with them; and if my fortune be small, it is

still sufficient to support us, and he is not entitled to taunt me with his great wealth, or to use it as a chain for binding you to his side, if neither you nor I ask to share it. Once more, my dear Mary, will you not give me this fair hand?"

"Oh, Frank, dearest Frank, how I wish I could see my father!"

"Have that wish gratified, Mary," said a voice behind her.

Both parties turned suddenly in dismay, and beheld Mr. Staunton. He had answered in person the note of Lady Carpenter, had entered the house in his usual quiet manner, and on learning in the hall below who was in the drawing-room, had forbidden the servants to announce him. Forewarned by the letter which he had received of the probable affection which existed between Frank and his only child, he had been naturally, to the last degree, anxious to ascertain the footing upon which the parties still were, and had entered the

room with so noiseless a tread, that the young lovers occupied with each other had been unconscious of his approach.

As soon as Mary had become aware of his presence, she sprung to her feet, and flung her arms round the old man's neck, and exclaimed, as she embraced him convulsively :

"Oh, father! my dear father! do not be angry. He is not to blame."

"Angry, Mary!" said Mr. Staunton, in a tone which, though grave, was perfectly free from passion; "why should you suppose I should be angry? A young gentleman, well-bred and well-born, has made you an offer of his hand. It is what any young gentleman well-bred and well-born is entitled to do. You have referred him for his answer to your father, and you have done well. It now remains for me to ascertain what are the grounds upon which that gentleman thinks it fair or just that I should give him my only child. Sit down,

Mary. Mr. Francis Delamere, will you do me the honour to take a seat?"

The two parties obeyed. The poor girl because she literally was unable to stand, and Frank in unconscious acquiescence to the wishes of his host.

There was dead silence for about a minute.

Of the three, Mr. Staunton was the only one who had retained his self-possession. He looked gravely at the young couple before him, and then in a tone of voice which was studiously polite, but cold and calm, he said:

"Mr. Delamere, you have offered marriage to my daughter. It is the highest compliment that man can pay to woman. She has referred you to me for your answer. You will, perhaps, therefore do me the favour to inform me. Why should I give you my daughter?"

The question was a simple one; nay, more, it was one which Frank had a thousand times anticipated, and a thousand

times in his solitary rides in the Park he had framed to it a convincing reply. Yet, now when the question was put, and his eloquence was most needed, it failed him, for he said nothing.

"You are silent, young gentleman," said Mr. Staunton. "Have you no reasons to adduce for an act, which, if it affected not your own happiness, perilled at least that of my child?"

Frank muttered something in which the words, his affection and his family were alone audible.

"Of your affection, Mr. Delamere," said the old man, "I will not permit myself to judge, except to say, that it would have appeared to me better evidence of it, had you not attempted to entangle a thoughtless girl, in what, to use the mildest term, is an unequal match. As to your family, it is that of five thousand young men in England, —that of a respectable country gentleman. But supposing that both were undeniable,

there is something else necessary for happiness in the married state beyond the position of the parties in the world, or their first attachment. There is an old proverb : ' When poverty comes in at the door love flies out of the window.' It is a true one. You have made an offer to my daughter. You have probably the means of supporting a wife, for I take it for granted (and the old man's eyebrows knit, and his cheek flushed), that you did not intend to make the wealth of her father contribute to the support of a marriage to which you did not ask his consent. I repeat, then, you have, no doubt, the means of supporting her ?"

" I have," said Frank; but in a tone so low as to be hardly articulate.

" And what," said Mr. Staunton, with a half sneer, " may be the amount of your fortune ?"

Frank was silent.

" Young gentleman, I ask you to answer me upon your honour."

There was no farther place for hesitation.

"I have at present," said Frank, "about nine thousand pounds."

"And at your mother's and uncle's death what addition do you count on receiving to this?"

"About five thousand pounds more."

"In all, fourteen thousand pounds. Now listen to me, Mr. Delamere. I was born a poor man, the son of a watchmaker, in the north of England. By honesty, by attention, by incessant labour, I have raised myself from the situation of one who was little better than a pauper, to that of being the head of the first manufacturing house in this kingdom. At an early period of my life I had obtained what would have been considered by most men of my humble birth an ample competency, for it was more than sufficient to supply me with the necessaries and luxuries of life. But still I worked on. Why? Because I was ambitious. Because under the coarse exterior and rude

manners of James Staunton, the watch-maker, there existed a desire to found a great family. With this end I married a nobly connected wife. She gave me no son. I complained not of it, but it was a heavy blow, for it gave one great check to my ambition. I had dreamed of labouring for him, of saving for him, of ennobling through his wealth and mine the name of Staunton. It was but a dream, for I had only one child, and that a girl. I was compelled to rebuild my structure of future greatness, and I determined, though I had been obliged to abandon the idea of securing nobility to my own name, of securing it to my descendants by wedding my daughter to the heir of some great and titled family. Such has been my dream—a dream, not of a day, or of a month, or of a year, but of a life. And now you would have me abandon all this, that which I have toiled, and saved, and struggled for, in order that I might gratify the love-sick folly of a foolish girl,

or the interested addresses of the man who would marry her. No, Sir, it is impossible. You must seek for a bride elsewhere, for you shall never wed the daughter of James Staunton."

There was silence for a minute. Mary was as pale as death, and over Frank's brow the colour went and came like the changeful humours of an April hour. He moved not, however, though Mr. Staunton had intimated by his manner that the interview had terminated. Frank could not bring himself to resign all hopes of happiness without a struggle.

"You are prejudiced against me, Mr. Staunton. That affair of the election has injured me in your good opinion."

"I am not prejudiced against you, Mr. Delamere. As for the affair of the election, and your consequent dismissal from my office, I am ready to confess that I was wrong. I have received from the best sources, the most positive assurance that

you were unacquainted with your nomination. Have you no better argument to offer?"

"Yes," said Frank, as his courage, like that of a desperate man, rose with the very intensity of his despair; "I have."

"And what may that be?" said his host, with something of surprise.

"The argument of your own life. Yours has been a happy existence, because it has been an existence of progress. With your activity, your necessity for labour, your desire to rise in the world, you would have been less enviable, if fortune had bestowed upon you in infancy the high rank and the colossal wealth which has ever been the object of your aspirations; for life would have satiated one to whom it denied alike an object for hope or for attainment. Will you forgive me for saying, that, in this character of mind, Miss Staunton resembles her father; and that, with her ambition and her energies, she would have

a prospect of a happier existence as the wife of a man who is likely to work his way up fortune's ladder, than of one who, placed upon its summit, sinks into a dreamy apathy for the simple reason, that he who has everything, has nothing to struggle for or to desire."

"And Mr. Francis Delamere," said the old man, in a cold tone, "would suggest that he was the person who was likely to be the successful candidate for the world's favours. It may be so, for I dispute not his talents; but has my daughter permitted him to say, that her happiness will be assured by sharing his career?"

There was a dead silence. Frank looked at Mary; but the poor girl, pale as monumental alabaster, said nothing.

"My daughter does not answer, and she does well. As I entered the room, I heard her refer you to her father, and I answer for her; better able than she is, from my age and my experience, to judge of

what is best suited for her happiness. When she marries, I must seek for her a wealthier mate than Mr. Delamere."

"Yet, ere you decide," said Frank, interrupting him, "will you permit me to say but one word? I know I have no right to allude to Miss Staunton's feelings, nor do I; but I venture to ask that you will not deprive me of all hope. I am young; my progress in my present career has been most rapid: I have already been offered a place in the ministry; and I trust, that in a few years I shall be able to shape out for myself a position, distinguished enough to enable me to pretend, without presumption, even to the honour of Miss Staunton's hand."

"And you would have me wait for your success, Mr. Delamere? Impossible! I will not peril Mary's happiness, upon a contingency; nor will I permit her to form an engagement which may be protracted to an indefinite extent. You are young, no doubt;

you are talented; and you have been successful; for I have read in the newspapers, not only with surprise, but pleasure, your eloquent advocacy of interests, and of a class which hitherto have never been so well supported. But all this does not change my purpose. You want that which is the basis of independence, and which is absolutely necessary to give permanent weight to a public man—you want wealth. There may be exceptions, but I cannot admit exceptions into my argument. As a general rule, no good speaker is listened to with confidence in this country, unless he possess fortune. Without it, be his talents or even his consistency what they may, he can have no enduring influence; for, in place or out of it, he is ever liable to be considered as an interested partisan. But to continue this interview would be useless. It must now terminate. Henceforth our paths in life must be separate. On the part of my daughter, there-

fore, and of myself, Mr. Delamere, I must say farewell."

"And would you dismiss me, without having one word to say against my talents, my character, my prospects?"

"I impeach none of them, but I do not recognise their value, unsupported as they are by the fortune that is necessary to make them available."

"And is there no hope, then?"

"None whatever. Had you been the possessor of Delamere Court, free and unencumbered as it was in the days of its prosperity, it might possibly have been otherwise; but had you the virtues of an archangel, I would never consent to give you my daughter, while you were, as you are —a beggar. Once more, I must insist on terminating this interview. Nay," continued he, as Frank would have again spoken, "I address myself to your better feelings, Mr. Delamere. My daughter is sinking fast;

and, for her sake, I would ask you to be gone."

It was impossible to resist such an appeal. Poor Mary had become paler and paler as the interview proceeded, and her now death-like cheek intimated too distinctly for doubt, the necessity for Frank's complying immediately with her father's wishes.

"You are right, Mr. Staunton," said he; "God help me! I have been too long here; but we do not part in anger. You will shake hands with me?"

"Willingly," replied Mr. Staunton; "and anywhere else but here, or at Staunton Lodge, I shall be happy to see Mr. Delamere, and hear of his success."

Frank wrung the old man's hand; he then bowed low to Mary. His salutation was replied to by an almost imperceptible motion of the head; and in another minute the heir of the Delameres, was in the street.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNCLE JOHN GETS FLIGHTY.

"*Oli.* Poor gentleman, he's much distract.
How does he, sirrah?
Clo. Truly, Madam, he holds Beelzebub at the stave's end, as well as any man in his case may do; he has here writ a letter."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

It was about six days after the events which we have narrated in the last chapter, that Mrs. Delamere and Uncle John were seated in the drawing-room at Laurel Cottage. Breakfast was just over, and the worthy friend of Jung Jow was busily employed in his usual morning task, that of scanning the newspapers. Suddenly the

student gave a shout, which astonished his companion.

"Hollo!" said he. "What is this, Madam Delamere? By Jove, I must be off to town!"

"What is the matter?" said the old dame in alarm, and putting down her knitting.

"Why, listen to this," said Uncle John, and he read as follows:

"'We are concerned to state that Mr. Delamere, M.P., is dangerously ill at his chambers in the Albany. In the present tottering state of the ministry, the absence of a supporter so distinguished for his ability will be much felt.'"

"Oh, my dear Uncle John!" said the anxious mother, "I must go to town immediately. Frank must be very ill. Nothing but severe illness could have kept him away from the House, when the ministry are so hard pressed."

"Pooh, pooh! Madam Delamere, you cannot believe a word that them newspaper

chaps say. They are all like that funny fellow in the book that I bought last week, which everybody is speaking of, Baron Munchausen. I don't doubt but to-morrow we shall have a contradiction of the whole story from authority."

"No, no, my dear Sir, don't try to persuade me," said the worthy dame, as the tears came into her eyes. "I must have better evidence of Frank's health than a newspaper paragraph. You forget," said she, with an attempt to smile, "that he is an only son."

"Well, Madam Delamere, what of that? Is not that a matter in which I am as much interested as you are? Is not he an only nephew? for I don't recognise that smooth-spoken whelp in the Treasury."

"Oh, don't attempt to persuade me. I must go."

"Nothing of the sort, Madam Delamere. I am commander-in-chief here. It would be very strange if I, who managed all Jung

Jow's affairs, and set him twice upon his legs, should not be able to bring this youngster round. So I'll go to town, and report progress, as Frank would say in the House."

Mrs. Delamere would have contested the point, but the worthy Captain was resolute. So it was agreed that Uncle John should proceed to London to ascertain personally the amount of Frank's indisposition, with a proviso that if the illness were serious, Mrs. Delamere should be permitted to join him. And accordingly, on that very afternoon, Captain Delamere proceeded to the metropolis.

The account in the newspaper was but too true. Frank had got over his refusal at the Hermitage easily enough. The wound given by Dan Cupid had then been new, and new wounds are not difficult to heal. But the announcement made to him in the drawing-room in Grosvenor Square was a more serious calamity. He had now been

for a year in almost unbroken intimacy with Mary, and the admiration which in the first instance had been kindled by her beauty, had ripened into an overwhelming attachment, as he became acquainted with her mental qualities, and with what he estimated, and with justice, more highly, the straightforward honesty of her nature. Besides, though he had scarcely confessed it even to himself, the main stimulus which had enabled him to devote himself in the first instance perseveringly to a profession which he disliked, and in the second, to those higher objects which were likely to award to him parliamentary distinction, was the hope of winning Mary's affection; and that hope had existed amidst all the difficulties and untoward events of his career. The period necessary for its accomplishment might be longer or shorter, but so long as Heaven gave him health, he was conscious that he had talents and energies which would shape out for himself a glorious future, and if Mary

Staunton did not marry in the interval, he felt assured that the day would come when he should possess a position distinguished enough to command the respect, the admiration, perhaps the love even, of a being so gifted and so ambitious. Thus amidst all the clouds which had darkened the ground beneath his feet, there was still in the horizon one spot radiant with sunshine, which, however distant, tempted him on in the hope of a brighter sky. That gleam of light existed no longer. The difficulty now was not merely making himself worthy of Mary's affections, or winning her consent. It was more formidable. It was to win the consent of Mr. Staunton; and those very qualities which were likely to insure him success with the daughter, were equally unlikely to obtain it with the father. Mary required intellectual distinction. Mr. Staunton demanded wealth, and princely wealth—Delamere Court, or the half million which was

its equivalent. The attainment of both the great prizes of life was impossible, and yet without their attainment his suit was hopeless. The two years spent in the counting-house at Manchester had enabled the young *employé* to estimate accurately the character of the great manufacturer. James Staunton was strictly a man of his word. He ever gave what he had promised. But his iron will was as unbending in the evil as the good, and when he had refused, he adhered rigidly to the refusal. Thus Frank's existence had become a blank, for he felt that without Mary Staunton that existence would be profitless, and yet there was no prospect, even the most distant, of winning her hand. Once or twice, indeed, the thought came across his brain, that his fair idol might be induced secretly to accept his hand in spite of her father's opposition. But even this hope died in its birth. Mary was too high principled for deceit. She might refuse to

marry any one else, but without the consent of her father she never would marry Frank Delamere.

The mental struggle had produced its natural result. Poor Frank had become ill. Life had lost its object. The very career of ambition to which but a few days before he had devoted himself so eagerly, and in which his success had appeared so well ascertained, had become distasteful to him. It might bestow its usual prizes of ambassadorships, secretaryships, premierships. It was deficient in the one necessary to give a relish to all the rest; and the poor lad, hour by hour, more hopeless of the future, at length shut his door resolutely, alike against friends and acquaintances, and gave himself up to solitude and sorrow.

It was about a week after his rejection by Mr. Staunton, that Frank was seated in his arm-chair in his dressing-gown and slippers, and as usual buried in painful

reflections. The few days of misery had done their work on his young cheek. His dress was slovenly and his beard unshaven. He had no fear of interruption; for to use the University phrase, he had "sported his oak," or in other words, closed the outer doors of his chambers; and the frequent visitors, or the more interested acquaintance who paid their court to the rising sun, were compelled to depart without seeing him or marked their advent merely by passing their letters or cards into the letter-box. One individual, however, did not appear so easily satisfied with his exclusion. With others, some two or three violent thumps upon the door had terminated their efforts, or evinced their despair. With the new-comer, on the contrary, the assault was begun and carried on with a pertinacity which seemed to defy opposition.

"The fool," said Frank to himself, "will go away."

He was wrong. The fool did not go

away. On the contrary, the thumping gradually changed into a "devil's tattoo," whose perseverance was only equalled by its increasing energy. At length the noise appeared to awaken the attention of the other five inhabitants of the staircase, for doors were opened and voices were heard counselling the would-be visitor to silence or departure. It was apparently of no use, for the music which is understood to be the favourite air of the Prince of Darkness, became more sonorous and rapid than ever. Frank got angry.

"I'll go," said he to himself, "and see who this fellow is. I warrant that, be he who he may, he will not venture to come back again."

Accordingly he drew the bolts, and to his astonishment, found standing on the outside Uncle John.

"Unkennelled the fox at last," said the old soldier. "By Jove, Frank, your rooms are as difficult to enter as Jung Jow's

zenana. What the deuce is in the wind now?"

It is unnecessary to say that Frank shook hands with his uncle, and after re-closing the outer gate of his fortress, accompanied his relative to his sitting-room.

"What is the matter, boy?" said Uncle John. "At Laurel Cottage the newspapers have been frightening your mother into fits. And here I find you with a beard long enough to qualify you for a Vizier. What is the matter?"

It was in vain that Frank attempted to parry the question. Uncle John's talent for extracting information could not have been greater had he studied the duties of the confessional under Peter Dens. Bit by bit the truth came out—the rides with Mary —the mutual tastes—the growth of the affection — the half acceptance by the daughter—the refusal by the father—his despair.

"Ah! now, boy," said Captain Delamere,

"I have got a clear idea of the story, but it has cost me the devil's own work to get at it. But why did not you tell me all thi before?"

"Where would have been the use? It would only have vexed you, and the more so, because you could have done nothing to have remedied the evil."

"You think so, do you? And why?"

"Good heavens, uncle, do you ask? Mr. Staunton is a man of his word."

"What is that to me?"

"Everything, my dear uncle, for when he has once formed a resolution, nothing can induce him to alter it."

"Ay, a chap like them chaps who made the laws of the Medes and Persians—his decisions change not. I rather like that sort of thing. I prefer Hickory to Willow any day. I am somewhat stiff-necked myself; a trifle stiffer even, I suspect, than the cotton-spinner."

"Yes, my dear uncle, this unbending will may be a virtue in both you and Mr. Staunton; but it is unfortunate for me that while his obstinacy proves my ruin, yours does me no good."

"There you are wrong again, boy. I am rather fond of a bit of a row; and I have not had one since the skipper drowned my boa, so I think, for the fun of the thing, I'll have a row with the cotton-spinner."

"Quarrel with Mr. Staunton, Uncle John? Why it would be madness. You have nothing to quarrel about."

"Wrong again, boy; I have found a subject already."

"And what is it pray?"

"You."

"Me? what can you find for quarrel about me?"

"He says you shan't marry his girl I say you shall. That is all."

"My dear uncle, this is worse than folly."

"On the contrary, it is capital good sense. Hark ye, Frank. Do you want to marry the cotton-spinning girl?"

"Oh, my dear uncle, need you ask."

"Answer me distinctly, Frank. None of your shilly-shallys. Do you want to marry her?"

"I would sell my existence to be but a day the possessor of her hand."

"Hollo, Frank! That's sentimental,—that's poetical;—I doubt if that sonneteering Persian beggar, Hafiz, could have come it stronger. Well, you shall marry her."

"But how?"

"I'll write a letter to the cotton-spinner, telling him I wish it."

Frank bent forward in his chair and cast an eager glance at Captain Delamere. He had always thought Uncle John flighty, he now considered him a proper candidate for St. Luke's.

His relative interpreted well the glance.

"Pooh, pooh, boy!" said he, "you think

me fit for a strait-jacket, you forget that we Orientals were always a people of loose habits," and the Captain intimated his approbation of his atrocious pun by a laugh which shook the room, and which sounded in Frank's ears as shockingly misplaced, considering the present state of his despair.

"And now, boy, for pen ink and paper."

"They are on the table beside you. But what would you do, uncle?"

"Write a letter to the cotton-spinner to be sure, to tell him I wish the match."

"Oh, my dear uncle, you would not so compromise me."

"Hold your tongue, you whelp. You fellows who have by chance said a few clever sentences in the House of Commons, think that nobody can do anything well but yourselves. I will write an epistle which shall be as persuasive as a diplomatic missive of Pitt's, when he promises a subsidy to a beggarly German Grand-Duke."

And without waiting for further observa-

tions from his young relative, the Captain seized a goosequill and commenced an epistle.

"Albany.

"Sir.

"My nephew has got a fit of the blues, and I understand that you are the cause of it. He is in love with your little girl, and I suspect that your little girl is in love with him; which I don't think at all extraordinary, as Frank is a devilish handsome fellow. As therefore the happiness of both is concerned, I think the sooner they marry the better. From what I hear, you have no objection to Frank, personally; and I should be astonished if you had, for he stands six feet in his stocking soles. You said something indeed about his want of fortune, which I did not clearly understand. But I dare say we can put that to rights, for I have got fifteen hundred pounds in the bank, and some small savings besides, and I should

not object, as I have a sort of liking for the whelp to settle it upon him. I should be glad to hear your opinion on the subject, and so an early answer will oblige,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN DELAMERE."

The Captain read over his epistle carefully to himself, and then repeated the perusal aloud for Frank's benefit, with the air of one who has composed a piece of eloquence which would melt the heart of a rock.

"There, boy, what do you say to that?"

"Say, uncle," repeated Frank, in a tone between terror and astonishment, "that I trust you are merely joking. Such a letter as that, even if Mr. Staunton were disposed to be favourable to my wishes, would make him my enemy for life, and deprive me of all hope of winning his daughter."

"Bah, bah! nothing of the kind. It is just the sort of billet-doux to get you the girl."

"Oh, uncle! I entreat you not to send it."

"Pshaw! nonsense! send it I will. But as you are so chicken-hearted I have no objection to shove in a postcript," and the worthy Captain resumed his pen.

"P.S. I have read over the above letter to my nephew, but he don't like it. He has even had the impudence to tell me that it would ruin him, and he entreats me not to send it. I begin to think with you, that the fellow is an ass, but two business men like you and myself will soon settle the matter, so the sooner the marriage takes place the better."

This elegant effusion, notwithstanding the entreaties of his nephew, was sealed and addressed, and Frank's servant, who had returned in the interim, was dispatched with it to Grosvenor Square.

Fortunately, Mr. Staunton was in town,

and at home, and in half an hour the messenger returned with an answer. It was delivered to Uncle John. As for poor Frank, he buried his face in his hands, and with the philosophy of despair awaited the announcement of the ruin of his hopes.

The Captain read over the epistle with attention and in silence.

"Hurra," said he at length, "hurra, I thought the nettles would sting him. What a towering rage the cotton-spinner's in;—serve him right for refusing his daughter to a Delamere. Do you want to hear the letter, Frank?"

"No, uncle," said Frank, in a calm voice, but with a face as pale as death, "you have taken your own way in spite of me, and have utterly ruined me. Be content with your success without giving me the pain of listening to its notification."

"Pooh, fiddlestick! it will do you good. Only fancy the airs that cotton-spinning fellow gives himself. One might have

guessed he was a watchmaker's son. He don't write in the pleasant gentlemanly way that I do, Frank. Just hear what the vulgar fellow says."

And the worthy Captain read as follows:

"Grosvenor Square.

"Sir,

"I have received your very impertinent production, and am not astonished that it should have excited the censure and disgust of your nephew. Out of respect to him, however, I will condescend—('Only fancy, Frank, the cotton-spinning beggar condescends;' and Uncle John having relieved his bile by this small interpolation proceeded: 'Where was I? ay,')—condescend to repeat to you upon paper the decision I announced to him personally. I have a great respect for your nephew, Mr. Francis Delamere. While in my service his conduct merited nothing but praise; since then, by his ap-

pearances in Parliament, he has shown great talent and won himself a high position; and I have nothing to say against his person, his age, his character, his connexions. All are unimpeachable, but he is a beggar; had it been otherwise, my decision would have been different; for so strong is my prejudice in his favour, that I have no hesitation in saying that if he had been the possessor of the unencumbered property of his ancestors, I should, notwithstanding his want of title and rank, have preferred him for a son-in-law to any young man of my acquaintance—I repeat this. You call yourself a man of business—a result I certainly never should have arrived at from the tone of your correspondence; but it is probable that your business-like qualifications, however small they may be, will enable you to comprehend that the future possession of the fifteen hundred pounds which you so ostentatiously parade as the great item of your savings, will not be a

sufficient provision for the daughter of one who has the honour to subscribe himself,

"Your obedient servant,

"James Staunton."

"There, Frank," said the worthy Captain, in a tone of triumph, "what do you say to that?"

"What I said before," replied Frank, in the accents of calm despair, "that there was little wanting for my ruin; and that you, my nearest connexion and who should have been my best friend, may claim the honour of having effected it."

"Stuff, boy, stuff! you are a fool. But I say, Frank, are you quite sure about the old fellow?"

"How do you mean?"

"Is he a man of his word?"

"To the very letter."

"And if you were the proprietor of Delamere Court without a mortgage on it, would he give you his girl?"

"Undoubtedly. He told me so in Grosvenor Square, and now he repeats it in his letter."

"Ay, true. I thought there was nothing like black and white for it," and Uncle John rose and laid his hand upon the bell-rope.

Frank's servant answered the summons.

"Young man," said the Captain, "call me a hackney coach; and d'ye hear, I am going to breakfast here to-morrow morning at nine. Sharp, at nine I say; so take care that your master is shaved and dressed as befits the respect due to his uncle."

Frank made no further opposition, and the messenger departed.

"Now, boy," said Captain Delamere, as the door closed, "that matter is settled. So remember, have yourself dressed; for, immediately after breakfast, I am going to take you to see a friend, who may possibly give you a lift in the world, and may perchance win you the smile of the cotton-spinner's daughter."

"I will attend you where you like," said Frank, apathetically; "but I pray you for the future never allude to Miss Staunton. You are my uncle, and the relationship ties my tongue; but to the day of my death, I never can forget that you have been my ruin."

"Ruin!" said his worthy relative. "Ho, ho, ho! Ruin! ha, ha, ha!" and to the astonishment of Frank, Captain Delamere commenced humming a tune and spinning round the room to its inspiration in a *pas seul* which would have petrified Taglioni, accompanying his saltatory performances by sundry distortions of the body and of his remaining arm, of the most extraordinary description. His pirouettes were in the acme of their glory, when the servant returned and announced the vehicle. Uncle John, however, gravely terminated what appeared to be the figure of his dance.

"There, Frank," said he, as he spun his way to the door of the room, "I doubt if Jung

Jow's best Almé could have beaten that. But remember to-morrow at nine," and the Captain disappeared.

Frank gazed after him in terror and astonishment.

"God help me!" said he. "Here is a new misfortune. But I might have guessed it from the tone of that letter. Uncle John has gone mad."

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. STAUNTON GROWS AMIABLE.

"*Cel.* Go to. Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind?

Orl. I will.

Ros. Ay, but when?

Orl. Why now."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

FRANK'S valet punctually performed Uncle John's orders. The breakfast was upon the table, the rolls and muffins, the tea and coffee, ready to the moment indicated. Nay, Frank even, by a judicious parade of his best razors on his toilet, had been induced to shave himself, and once more appeared in the guise and costume of civilized society.

As nine struck, Captain Delamere's rap was heard at the door. He also seemed to have made sundry changes in his outward man. He had long since, to please his sister-in-law, shaved off his beard, retaining only a large grey moustache on the upper lip. In obedience too to the same gentle influence, he had resigned his silk trowsers, his crimson velvet waistcoats, his gold-tasselled hessians, and had adopted the dress of English every-day life. Upon the present occasion, however, he seemed to have paid more than ordinary attention to the adornment of his person, and was dressed in a suit of black, which bore upon it the impress of the first artists. The coat and waistcoat were evidently from Stultz; the tight-fitting pantaloons from the *atelier* of Anstey; while no one but Hoby could have made the hessians so exquisite in their fit about the instep, in the large yet graceful half-open folds at the ankle, and in the polish of their pliant material. Round his throat was a white neckcloth,

tied in a manner which did honour to his guardsman's recollections; and Frank, as he looked at the tall and yet lithy figure, the lofty forehead, the piercing dark eye, and the chiselled features, felt that he had never seen any one who bore in his air, look, step and glance, more thoroughly the impress of high blood.

"Well, boy," said the Captain, "got yourself made decent, I see. What! you are staring at me. I thought I might as well do a little that way myself. Got some new clothes to please your mother, boy. By Jove, if I go on this way, patronising those tip-top snips and boot-making chaps, I shall soon be dipping my little capital, I fear. However, Frank, I have good news for you. I have found an investment for my fifteen hundred pounds at last: I settled it all last night. Gad! I had to do with a sharp old codger, I can tell you. As like that cotton-spinning chap as two peas. However, we will not talk of that just now,

so let us to breakfast. Hum, ha! rolls good; muffins tolerable. Coffee — pooh! like all English coffee, a gallon of water to an ounce of dust. Give me some tea, Frank, that's a slop at least which we English understand."

As the Captain rattled on, the meal proceeded. Frank said nothing, and it might be added, ate nothing. The misery of the last seven days had been brought to a climax on the preceding morning; and though his mind had been relieved, by Uncle John's rational conduct and discourse, of the doubts which his nephew had begun to entertain of his sanity, yet his sorrows were too deep-seated to leave him any disposition to indulge in conversation or gratify appetite. His silence attracted the notice of Captain Delamere.

"What the devil is th matter with you, Frank?" said his worthy relative. "You are as dull as my rattle-snake, after I had grueled him with opium. Now, this is what I call

being very ungrateful. Here am I, come all the way from Manchester to see you, and you are as stupid as an owl. I suppose it is all about that cotton-spinning girl. You have not half forgiven me, I suspect, for that beautiful letter which I wrote to the crusty old dog, her father."

"I do not blame you, uncle," said Frank, "for I believe you acted with the best intentions; but I am well aware that that letter ruined all my prospects."

"Nonsense, boy, nonsense, I tell you. It was just the letter to do the work for you. Old Staunton, to be sure, answered it in a huff. But now that he has thought over the matter for four-and-twenty hours, I should not wonder if he would change his mind. You forget, you young dog, that I offered to do the thing handsomely; and in case he chose to give you the girl, engaged to settle upon you my fifteen hundred pounds, and the rest of my little savings. Gad, boy! I'll

warrant the cotton-spinner does not get such an offer every day. I'll be sworn there never was a clerk yet in his establishment that could make such a settlement upon his girl. What do you call her, Frank?"

"Mary, uncle," groaned Frank from the pit of his stomach.

"Mary! oh, I rather like that name. Should not object to have a niece called by it. It sounds pretty enough—Mary Delamere. I say, Frank, remember, your second son is to be called Jack. I insist upon that. I am thinking of leaving him a third of the fifteen hundred pounds, and the other little savings of mine."

"Oh, uncle! my dear uncle, I beseech you do not drive me mad by your ill-timed pleasantry."

"Mad! It's I that am like to go mad," and the Captain began to hum the ominous air, which on the preceding day had introduced the *pas seul*, which, according to

Uncle John's ideas on the subject, had rivalled the best performances of Jung Jow's Odalisques.

"Good God!" said Frank to himself, "the fit is coming on him again. It would be most painful to put him under restraint; and yet, if I leave him at liberty, of a certainty he will do mischief to himself or somebody else."

At this moment a bell was rung at the outer door. The sound seemed to have an exciting influence upon Uncle John's music, for the unknown air, instead of being quietly purred through his lips, all at once assumed a fiercer character, and was snorted forth from his nostrils in a manner which affected in a most painful degree the nerves of his nephew. But his agitating contemplations were interrupted by the entrance of the servant with a letter. As Frank took it in his hand, he became deadly pale.

"Hollo, boy!" said the Captain, "what is the matter now? You look as if you

had seen a ghost. Who is that epistle from?"

"Why, Sir, it is in Mr. Staunton's hand-writing."

"What! from the cotton-spinning chap? I don't doubt he has thought over the matter. I dare say, he has accepted my fifteen hundred pounds settlement. But open it, man—open it, and let us hear what the spinning-jenny fellow says."

Frank obeyed, and read as follows:

"Grosvenor Square.

"My dear Sir,

"I am a man of my word; I ever was a man of my word; I always shall be a man of my word. When you made proposals for the hand of my daughter, I told you that I had nothing to object to your person, your family, your character, or your abilities. I informed you that the sole reason for my withholding my consent was your want of fortune; and I added that if you had been

the possessor of the Delamere estate unencumbered, that I should at once have given my consent to your union. With this knowledge you left Grosvenor Square. Will you permit me to say you have behaved cruelly in this matter, for, it is no use disguising it now, you must have been aware that Mary's happiness was as much interested in the result as your own. And yet with this knowledge, you affected poverty, while you must have been conscious that you were not only the proprietor of the Delamere estate, but of a funded property, compared with which even mine is insignificant. But let by-gones be by-gones. We will not revert to the past. I will only say that Mary and I have forgiven your waywardness and the sooner we see you in Grosvenor Square the better for the happiness of all parties.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Ever yours sincerely,

"James Staunton."

Frank laid down down the letter, and sunk back in his chair.

"It must be catching," muttered he to himself. "It is the dog-days. They must have gone all mad together!" and the poor lad remained in a state of stupor at the prevalence of an affliction which seemed to have taken possession of every one who was dear to him.

His reverie was broken by Uncle John.

"Hollo, Frank!" said the worthy Captain, "have your brains gone a moon-gazing? Why, what is the matter with you?"

"Need you ask, uncle? Is not that letter evidence enough that Mr. Staunton's mind has become affected?"

"His mind affected!" said his worthy relative. "No doubt of it, by my fifteen hundred pounds. I knew he never could resist it. But come, boy, are not you going to do the civil thing? Are not you going to see the old chap?"

"My dear Sir, in his present state of mental aberration it might be painful."

"Pooh, pooh! all the better reason for going. If he be playing the devil's delight at home, that poor girl of his may be frightened, and it might need two strapping fellows like us to walk him off to St. Luke's. So let us be gone."

And Uncle John rang the bell.

"Get a jarvey, young man, and immediately," said he to the servant who entered.

Frank was too overwhelmed by mental agitation to make any opposition. The hackney-coach arrived, and the relatives departed for Grosvenor Square.

They arrived there, and the Jehu gave his usual thundering rap upon the door. As soon as it was opened, Frank cast an eager glance at the faces of the domestics as if to catch from their looks some evidence of the amount of the malady of their master. They seemed, however, to take the calamity with wonderful indifference. Nay, more, as soon as the

features of the French corresponding clerk were seen at the window, there beamed forth upon every face a universal smile, as if the residence of an unfortunate maniac was the pleasantest spot in the world. To add too, to Frank's puzzle, one might have supposed that he was expected, and that more than ordinary ceremony was exhibited in his reception, for instead of the three servants who usually answered the door, there were now present *toute la maison*, as the French express it, the whole of the establishment of the wealthy cotton-spinner, butler and under-butler, groom of the chambers, and gentleman's gentlemen in their unimpeachable black, and half a dozen powdered footmen in livery. These were drawn up in the hall, and smiled and bowed most profoundly as the visitors passed.

"They are all mad together," said Frank, "and I think I shall go mad myself unless I soon see the end of it."

But there was no time for reflection.

Captain Delamere was already half way up the stairs, and his nephew hurried after him. A door was opened and they were in the drawing-room. But the scene which awaited him did not in any way tend to restore Frank to a belief in the sanity of his acquaintances. The occupants of the richly furnished chamber were Mary and her father. How far the former might be civil to his uncle whom she had seen two or three times at Laurel Cottage, Frank did not know, but he felt assured of this, that after the epistle written in that easy and gentleman-like style, upon which Captain Delamere prided himself, there was certain to be a quarrel between him and Mr. Staunton. What then was his astonishment when the master of the house advanced eagerly to the new-comers, and exclaiming, "Delighted to see you, Captain Delamere," shook hands with him as if he had been the dearest friend he had upon earth. In one so formal and distant as Mr. Staunton this was extraordinary enough,

but Mary's conduct in its extravagance threw her father's doings into the shade; for the Captain, who had taken the old gentleman's welcome with his usual philosophy, advanced to the sofa at the end of the room on which the young heiress was sitting, and having passed his arm round the fair girl's neck, and kissed her with the warmest affection, took his seat beside her, as if he had done the most natural thing in the world.

Frank was petrified. His uncle's impudence was enough in itself to produce astonishment, but Mary's quiet submission was still more extraordinary, and the heir of the Delameres stood for a moment as if he had been changed into stone.

"Well, you young whelp," said Uncle John "what is the matter with you? Have you got nothing to say for yourself?" and Captain Delamere burst into a long and loud laugh. It seemed infectious, for the cotton-spinner thrust his hands into his breeches-pockets and echoed the mirth of

his impertinent correspondent in what the Scotch call "a guffaw" loud enough to have brought down the plaster. As for Mary, her conduct was only a shade better, for though she did not irritate his ears by her gaiety, her eyes as she contemplated the confusion of her lover were brighter, gayer, more impertinent than ever.

"God help me!" said poor Frank, as he clasped his hand to his forehead, "will nobody explain this?"

"Explain it," said Captain Delamere, with a laugh, "why don't you explain it for yourself? You have lived with Uncle John for two years and three months, and have you never guessed, you young fool, that he had another name? Have you never discovered that Uncle John was Gianotti?"

CHAPTER XV.

A VETERAN'S OTIUM CUM DIGNITATE.

"A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich—"

DESERTED VILLAGE.

YES, Uncle John was Gianotti, and that single word will explain many of the apparent contradictions in this history.

The eventful career of Captain Delamere had been much what he described it. After he had been obliged to leave England by his extravagance in the Guards he had, as our readers are aware, proceeded to Naples. In Italy, and more especially in that portion of it which was long subjected to Spanish rule —the Milanese and Neapolitan territory—

sirnames are little in fashion, and men and women are for the most part distinguished by their Christian appellation, with the addition of Donna or Don, Signora or Signor. The general rule was applied to the new arrival, and Captain John Delamere was recognised everywhere by the title of the Signor Gian. Even this title received its modification. The Englishman was very young, and very handsome, and the daughters of the sun, who like Henry the Eighth loved to look on a man, had, in the graceful phraseology of the South, which conveys affection by diminutives, expressed their admiration for their stranger guest by entitling him, Il Gianotti. The designation took the fancy of Captain Delamere. He retained it in his wandering life, and the more willingly, as he was anxious, from a morbid feeling of anger, to deprive his family of all means of tracing his footsteps.

His adventures were much as he had represented them. He had been taken by an

Algerine cruizer, had been sold a slave into Egypt, and had been successively transferred to Bussora and Bombay. Eventually he had made his way into Upper India, and had taken service with Jung Jow Cheribow, one of its independent princes. When once there, his progress was rapid. He possessed great energy, indomitable courage, and more especially, from his Guardsman's life, an intimate acquaintance with the discipline and evolutions of regular troops. Among a warlike population, and more especially in a country where, from the slight tenure by which every sovereign holds his throne, kingdoms rise and fall like mushrooms, these qualities were highly valued and highly paid; and Captain Delamere soon became one of the most prized officers of his new master. A conspiracy was set on foot against the Prince, and was defeated much in the manner which Captain Delamere related it, with this difference, that the subordinate part, which in the narrative he had assigned to himself, was in

fact. supported by a brother military adventurer, a Neapolitan. On the extinction of the conspiracy, Uncle John, or in other words Gianotti, had by the gratitude of the Rajah, been made Vizier, and during the whole remaining portion of Jung Jow's life, had ruled the kingdom, its real master. Too shrewd not to be aware that his prosperity must have a close as sudden as its commencement, he had provided against the future by investing from time to time a portion of the funds which his clear intellect had added to the revenue with the Parsee merchants, or the English banks, at Bombay. These savings at the Rajah's death had amounted to about a million and a half sterling. His escape from a country over which he had for years ruled despotically, has been related in his own words exactly as it occurred. He reached in safety the English settlements; but it was his Neapolitan companion and not himself who had squandered in a few weeks the fortune

accumulated by the labour of years. Uncle John returned to England.

The feelings with which he revisited his native land were of a very mingled description. He had left it a beggar. He revisited it with wealth three times as great as was possessed by nabobs, even in the palmy days of Indian rule, and he knew well that those who had visited his poverty and his follies with the bitterest censure, would be the first to welcome eagerly one who had so many golden claims to their admiration.

But he had outlived that period of life in which vanity is most powerful. As a man gets older, new acquaintances and new pursuits are fatiguing to him, and he clings eagerly to the recollections of his boyhood —to the old familiar faces—to the scenes in which he had gambolled while a child. Captain Delamere therefore determined to set up the staff of his rest amongst his own family, and to terminate a life of ex-

citement by an old age of repose. This was a natural plan, but to make even it productive of probable happiness, it was necessary that he should become acquainted with that family's real character.

His long residence in the East had not improved his opinion of human nature. There is no spot on earth where the sun shines more brightly, and none in which the inhabitants watch more eagerly or worship more devoutly his rise. This, Uncle John had proved, and this had made him suspicious. His star was now in the ascendant, and was likely, if it exhibited itself in all its brilliancy, to have more than enough of adoration. The climate of England and India may be different, but the weaknesses of humanity are everywhere the same. The passion for gold may be stronger in one part of the world than another, but even in England, modified as it might be by the habit and character of the people, and by education, Captain Delamere felt, that were

he to exhibit himself to the eyes of his relations as the wealthy Vizier of Jung Jow, he should meet from the interested and disinterested alike nothing but incense. He resolved, therefore, to put them on their trial, and to affect poverty.

The result of the experiment is already known. The Lacys rejected him. Mrs. Delamere and her son were themselves reduced almost to beggary, but they still made him welcome to a share of the little that remained. Captain Delamere went to Laurel Cottage. A short time sufficed to enable one so deep read in human nature to make him acquainted with the character of its inmates. The single-minded honesty of his sister-in-law soon won his respect, the high spirit of his nephew his affection; and he was several times on the point of declaring himself what he really was—not the pauper relative, but the possessor of almost incredible wealth.

But prudence prevailed. Frank's great

failing was his too easy temper. He had already been persuaded by a plausible scoundrel to fool away the remains of his fortune; and Captain Delamere felt assured that to restore him to affluence, would only be to expose his young heir to fresh temptations on the part of the interested, and probably entail upon him in its results a second ruin more absolute than the first. Besides, Frank, as his uncle well saw, resembled himself in character; and though the Guardsman had committed a thousand follies, he was not the less anxious to prevent his relative from following his example. He decided, therefore, on allowing his nephew to taste the bitterness of poverty, and gather the knowledge which is its fruit.

A new object lent additional force to this resolution. Captain Delamere had seen Mary Staunton. He had been fascinated by her. Her great decision, her strong sound sense, her individuality, which distinguished her from the other prettily-

curled ladies of her acquaintance, marked her out to Uncle John as the very wife for his nephew. But even she might not be perfect; and an acquaintance with his riches might induce her to wed a wealthy suitor whom she might have refused to smile on in his poverty. It was an additional reason for his silence. If the girl was worth having for a niece, she would be ready to accept the vows of poor Frank Delamere. If she proved to be as interested as her father, Uncle John had determined that, whatever were her other excellent qualities, she should never become a member of his family.

His principle of action being thus sketched out, the story requires but little explanation. Captain Delamere put himself confidentially in communication with the family banker, the family solicitor, and Tom Smith. He insured the possession of Delamere Court, by forbidding them to fix a price, and by offering nine thousand pounds more than

was offered by the highest bidder. He had procured through a powerful commercial friend, Frank's admission into Mr. Staunton's office, with the intention of bringing his nephew into constant communication with the manufacturer's daughter. In the same manner he had enforced his dismissal from it as soon as he had learned that the scruples of that nephew prevented him paying his attentions to Miss Staunton, so long as he was dependent on her father. He had thus, also, through Tom Smith, and unlimited expenditure, secured the return of Frank for Delamere, after having renewed his old friendship with Sir John St. Paul, and persuaded the old Baronet, by stating to him confidentially his reasons, to resign his seat. He had provided the ten thousand pounds for Frank's support when in Parliament, and had, moreover, written his letter from the Albany, with the full knowledge of Mr. Staunton's character, for the accurate performance of his engage-

ments, for the purpose of winning from that gentleman in writing, an expression of his willingness to receive Frank for his son-in-law, were he the possessor of the unencumbered estate of Delamere. Last of all, on leaving his nephew on the preceding day, after executing the *pas seul* which had excited in Frank doubts of his uncle's sanity, he had sought an interview in Grosvenor Square. The astonishment of the manufacturer was of course unbounded, and his disbelief great. But Captain Delamere was not a man to leave a thing half done. He had insisted on the old gentleman accompanying him to the City, where the evidence of the solicitor, and the books of the bank, attested the accuracy of disclosures so extraordinary.

There was of course no longer any opposition. Captain Delamere returned to dinner in Grosvenor Square, and Mary was informed of the unexpected change in the fortunes of her lover, and the consent which her father

had given for their union. But the whimsical nabob was not yet satisfied. He loved mystification, and determined to keep it up to the last. He had dictated the letter which Mr. Staunton was to address to Frank, and had even fixed the moment for its delivery.

There is now little that remains to tell. "Happy is the wooing that's not long a-doing," was a favourite adage of Uncle John's. That day six weeks the marriage took place at St. George's, Hanover Square. I leave it to the imagination of my fair readers to picture to themselves the splendour of the *trousseau*—the diamonds such as no duchess in Londoncould boast—the beauty and blushes of the bride — the sumptuousness of the breakfast—the congratulations of the guests—the despair of the Lacys.

Frank and Mary, after their marriage-jaunt took up their permanent residence at Delamere Court, where the old Hall, under

the influence of Jung Jow's gold mohurs blazed forth once more in its quondam glory. Frank became the pattern of country gentlemen, but his rural avocations did not withdraw him from his loftier duties, and as member for the county, he still made himself heard in Parliament, where his opinions won for him a weight, such as was in earlier days vouchsafed to a Schippen or a Wyndham.

His career was eagerly watched by his devoted wife, though even her attention was divided by the necessity of superintending sundry olive-branches, who, in the course of years, sprouted up in considerable numbers at Delamere Court, and the second of whom, it may be added, rejoiced, we ought to say rejoices, in the name of Jack.

As for Captain Delamere, he purchased Houghton Farm from Mr. Staunton, and erected on the site of its ruinous edifice a handsome building in the Italian style of architecture, to which he gave the classical appellation of the Casa Gianotti. Un-

fortunately, he was unable to import the vines of the sunny South along with its nomenclature, but he did his best to remedy the evil by importing their produce; and the large cellar was filled to the door with the fruit of the best vintages, among which fame spoke largely of certain pipes of Madeira which had twice doubled the Cape, and whose oily drops were reported to approach nearer to the divine nectar than anything which had hitherto been vouchsafed to mortal lips. Nor had the grosser aliments been neglected. The friend of Jung Jow, by a judicious application of his gold rupees and the assistance of a French smuggling lugger, had contrived to seduce from the other side of the Channel a young *chef de cuisine*, who had caught his inspiration in that first of culinary temples, the Hôtel Cambacéres.

Shortly after Miss Betsy was gazetted as housekeeper to the single gentleman, and on the following Sunday appeared at church in a new bonnet and silk gown,

brilliant enough to send Miss Martha Blount to bed for a week under a violent attack of orthodoxy and bile. Many were the injurious observations uttered by the old maid against bachelors in general, and against Captain Delamere in particular. But nobody heeded them. The hospitalities of the Nabob were universal and incessant, and the inhabitants of the royal borough of Delamere, who had never agreed in anything else, agreed in this, that so long as the bin of Madeira lasted, and Monsieur Hypolyte continued to preside over the *casseroles*, it would be alike un-christian, and impolitic, to doubt the virtue of so irreproachable an Amphitryon as Uncle John.

THE END.

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